



**Introduction** Across our rural landscapes, paddock trees stand out as one of the defining elements. Paddock trees are the remnants of once extensive woodlands and forests. Their aesthetic and emotional values are hard to quantify. If our paddock trees continue to die at their present rate, in 50 years time or children may inherit a treeless landscape. The value of paddock trees to our environment, to stock and our soils and our own well being are many and we need to do something NOW to reverse the loss of paddock trees.

Project Platypus received a grant from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to highlight the importance of paddock trees and to encourage landholders across the catchment to protect existing paddock trees and replant the paddock trees of the future. Over 100 landholders have undertaken a Paddock Tree project. Each landholder was responsible for fencing the site and protecting/planting the trees with the fencing materials and trees funded.

The project has had excellent educational and practical outcomes and the ongoing monitoring of the health of plantings of fenced trees will be used to improve outcomes for our magnificent paddock guardians.



#### Values paddock trees provide ...

1. Protection from wind, cold, heat for pastures, crops and stock
2. Habitat for fauna, particularly birds, bats, insects and small mammals. 290 fauna species have been recorded using paddock trees.
3. Provision of hollows which take 150—200 years to form.
4. Stepping stones for fauna to facilitate dispersal and access to remnants.
4. Ecosystem services such as nutrient recycling, salinity control, erosion control. A single honeyeater can consume 25kg of insects a year.
5. Tourism, amenity and cultural values.
6. Honey and firewood from fallen branches.

#### Threats to paddock trees...

1. Many paddock trees are reaching senescence and there is little recruitment of new trees.
2. Dieback from nutrient build up, soil compaction, insect attack, ringbarking by stock etc leading to premature mortality.
3. Spray drift from herbicide and fertilizer application.
4. Bushfires and burning off stubbles catching trees alight.
5. Clearing legally and illegally for centre pivots, vineyards, plantations, etc.
6. When paddock trees die they still have excellent values providing habitat for wildlife, particularly in providing hollows, so removal of dead trees is threat.



Project Co-ordinator Bernie Rudolph saw first hand the loss of paddock trees on Ross and Judy Dunkley's Dadswells Bridge farm. Since buying the property over 50 trees had succumbed to drought, insect attack and compaction.

Fencing off existing paddock trees and planting trees and shrubs will contribute to a more healthy environment for trees.



Healthy mature paddock trees with young trees coming on is a positive sign for the future of the paddock trees on this Concongella property.

### Protecting Existing Paddock Trees

1. Protecting young saplings from grazing or rubbing can be as simple as placing a 44 gal drum around the tree, secured with a star picket.
2. Applying a fence to at least the drip line of the trees canopy will prevent the compaction of the root zone caused by stock which reduces water availability.
3. Fencing out a paddock tree with enough room to plant replacement trees and understorey plants is the optimum solution. Depending on the site, natural regeneration or recruitment may be a possibility.

### Planting New Trees

1. Planting single trees across a paddock is probably not the most economical way to establish trees. Plots should be at least 10x10 m with up to 9 trees planted. Rip lines and proper weed control will help with survival rates.
2. Indigenous species are going to perform the best
3. Choose the site for plots to maximize their habitat and stock shelter values, eg close to roadside vegetation, sited to maximize summer shade

### Findings to date

- Single netting guards are not secure enough to protect trees from stock.
- Larger fenced plots are more cost effective and can be combined with revegetation.
- Fencing a mature paddock tree needs to be large enough to include the canopy drip line.
- Farmers are very keen to plant small numbers of trees and it can be a first step to major revegetation



### More Information is Available:

Most information is extracts from journals and papers

- Booklet - Bats and Paddock Trees -DSE
- Paper- Wildlife Notes No 16—Paddock Trees and Wildlife
- Paper—The Conservation Value of Paddock Trees—a review by Land & Water Aust etc by Caruthers and Paton

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