



F . O . L . K . L . A . W .

NEWSLETTER Winter Newsletter 2013

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Hi all,

Sad news is never good news. In the last two months 12 Koalas have been involved in motor vehicle incidents and all had to be put down by vets. On a more positive note, we participated in the rescue of a Koala which was injured by a vehicle. She was up a gum tree and the Somers Fire Brigade helped get her down and then handed her over to the attending wildlife carer. We are glad to report that a full recovery was made.

A member has volunteered to build some much needed nesting/recovery boxes for the Balnarring wildlife carer to assist her in the good work and sometimes overwhelming demand for her services.

In June, 36 coastal manor gums which FOLKLAW members grew were donated to the Banksia Square friends group.

The yearly budget and Consumer Affairs returns for the Koala Reserve and FOLKLAW have been finalized and sent to Council and government.

Somers Koala Reserve Working Bees.

June working bee: 100 plants were planted by 7 volunteers, 60 Coastal Banksia seedlings were dug up for potting and weeding was carried out.

July work bee: 200 plants were planted by 8 volunteers.

August work bee: 100 plants were planted by 7 volunteers and weeding of new revegetation areas was done.

During June, 60 Coastal Banksia seedlings dug up from the reserve were potted up in the poly house.

During July, various seeds that had been collected were sown in propagating trays in the poly house.

Works carried in the Koala Reserve.

One illegally built large building in the ephemeral wetlands was dismantled and removed.

One illegal small structure just being constructed was removed from the wetlands.

The timber pedestrian entry barrier at the Victoria Ave end of the Reserve was repaired.

The Beach Hill dog bag box was repaired.

Unfortunately, Mornington Shire is no longer covering FOLKLAW's work so we have had to take out our own insurance policy to cover us at working bees. This unforeseen cost will have to be paid out of our funds. So if you can get other people to sign up for the Ritchie's Community Benefit Card it would help us to cover this new cost.

We will be manning a stall at the Somers Arts Fair on Sunday 27 October come fine or foul weather. If you have a question or idea for us, drop in and tell us.

Onion Grass (Baddie): (*Romulea rosea*)



Common names include Guildford Grass, Onion Grass and Rosy Sandcrocus. Onion Grass originated from South Africa.

It is a small plant, usually less than 20 cm high, with grass-like leaves. The flowers are pink with a yellow throat and appear in spring. Fruit are small, cylindrical, sweet and juicy when young. These fruit (called 'puddings') are sometimes eaten by children.

It is widely distributed throughout temperate and Mediterranean areas of Victoria, Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia.

Onion Grass is generally found in areas with low competition from other perennial plants due to low fertility, overgrazing, fire or poor seasonal conditions.

Onion grass is a perennial herb with distinctive growth behaviour. It looks like a grass, grows like an annual, and can spread rapidly on farm land. The plant not only produces abundant seed, but also

corms underground to survive the hot and dry summers in Mediterranean environments of temperate Australia. Most onion grass seeds require a temperature of $< 16.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ to germinate and animals can disperse large numbers of seeds through grazing (> 500 viable seeds/sheep/day). Seed can also be dispersed by mowing, slashing and by some insects such as ants. Seed and corm germinate or sprout in autumn to winter and grow over winter and flower from August to November. The flowers initially open close to the ground then the stalks elongate to lift them into the air and then bend downward to take the maturing capsule back to ground level. Top growth dies in summer leaving a perennial corm in the soil.

The corm may require slightly different temperature to grow but generally sprouts in autumn as well. Initially the corm supplies nutrients for the plant to sprout and the nutrients in the corm diminishes in approximately eight weeks after the plant emerges (Figure 1). The residual of the corm remains unchanged in weight for about 11 weeks and then diminishes from week 19 onwards. The new corm starts to develop six weeks after emergence, grows slowly until 14 weeks when the growth rate increases exponentially. There is a short period (week six to eight after emergence) when the old corm is exhausted and the new corm starts to develop. This is a window of opportunity for the most effective control with herbicides.

New corms generally develop on top of the old corms; therefore in theory, corms should get shallower with time. However, contractile roots may pull the corm deeper into the soil as it dries out. Some onion grass plants develop tap roots much bigger and stronger than fibrous roots which may well play a role in dragging the corms deeper. Some plants can develop multiple new corms from one plant, behaving like grass tillers.

The two main causes of onion grass infestation are autumn bare ground and lack of competition. Prevention involves managing the area to maintain above 70 per cent ground cover and maximising growth during autumn and winter.

Onion grass is highly sensitive to close defoliation. Cutting to one centimetre above ground at three to five week intervals reduced onion grass corm mass by 70 per cent, seed pod density by 100 per cent and plant density by 60 per cent compared with the non-defoliated control (Table 2). Cutting to five centimetres above ground also reduced onion grass corm mass by 58 per cent, seed pod density by 94 per cent and plant density by 35 per cent. Cutting at flowering only considerably reduced seed pod numbers (90 per cent), and corm mass to a lesser degree (27 per cent), but did not affect onion grass plant density.

