

SUMMER ISSUE · DECEMBER 2024

# GREENLINK NEWS

Your local indigenous plant nursery



## Greenlink Wins Award!!

### EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS AWARDS 2024

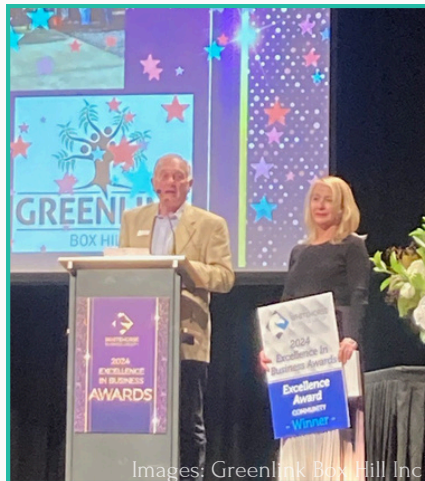
On the evening of 15 November, Greenlink Nursery was awarded the "Excellence Award Community", as part of the Whitehorse Business Group 2024 Excellence in Business Awards.

This was the top award in the community category, and reflects the outstanding work of our volunteers and contribution to sustainability and the environment.

Our success in achieving this award was a direct result of a nomination made by one of our delighted customers.

President Robert Jones, Vice-President Emi Luppino and Treasurer Trevor Eddy represented Greenlink, and were among 75 other finalists in various Business Awards categories with 25 Awards being presented.

We are obviously very proud of this achievement and we thank all members and volunteers for your support and contribution to the success of Greenlink.



Images: Greenlink Box Hill, Inc

Greenlink acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Owners of the land that the nursery conducts business on, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

## This issue:

It has been an incredibly busy end to the year at Greenlink, and this edition is filled with interesting stories we hope you will find enjoyable.

We feature a book review by one of our volunteers about the healing power of nature.

If you're interested in learning how to create a pond using a wine barrel, read on.....

Our customers and volunteers take centre stage, and rightly so!

On a more serious note, we provide some information about the threat posed to our wildlife by avian bird flu and what you can do if you see a sick bird.

Our kid's quiz is back (and yes, we know some slightly bigger kids like doing the quiz too and that's perfectly fine 😊)

\*\*NOTE: The nursery will be closed from 19th December 2024, and will reopen on 7th January 2025.

We hope you have a happy and restful holiday season, and have the opportunity to connect with nature in some way over summer. See you in 2025!





# Whitehorse Spring Festival

SUNDAY 17 NOVEMBER

The annual Whitehorse Spring Festival took place in November, with a steady stream of people making their way to the Greenlink Nursery stall to chat about indigenous plants! We loved all your questions about how to grow these beauties, and hope you learned something useful.

Even a torrential downpour and a rumble of thunder during the morning couldn't dampen the spirits of the festival-goers! Once the rain subsided, it was back to business as usual.

By the end of the day we had given away around 700 tubestock, and it was great to see so many kids engaging with our plants.

If you were one of the lovely people who came to say hello to our volunteers and picked up a free indigenous plant to take home, thank you! We will see you again next year!



# Wurundjeri Seasons

Garrawang  
Kangaroo-apple Season  
(December)

- Changeable, thundery weather.
- Dhuling (Goannas) are active.
- Buliyong (bats) are catching insects in flight.
- Days are long and nights are short.
- Fruits appear on Kangaroo-apple bushes.
- Bali (Cherry Ballart) is fruiting.
- Bunjil (Wedge-tailed Eagles) are breeding.

Source: [museums.victoria.com.au](http://museums.victoria.com.au)

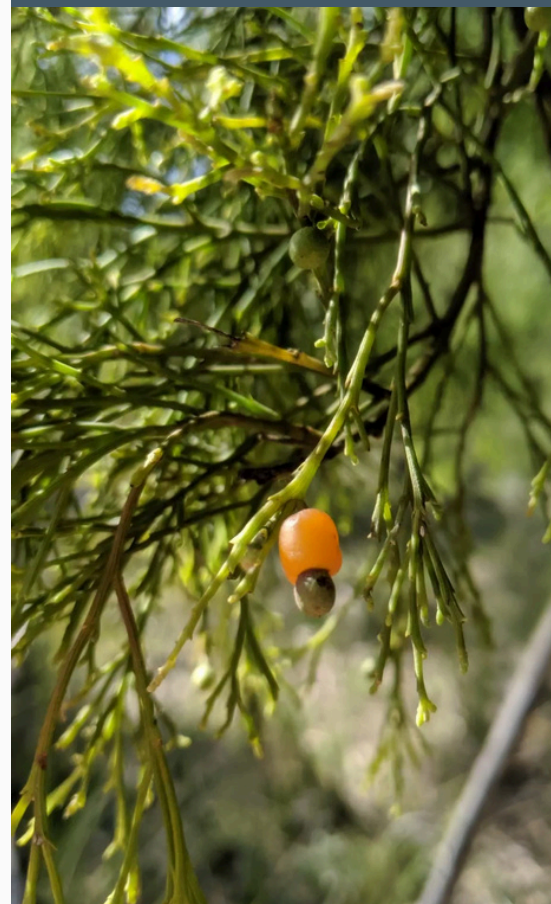




Image: Canva.com

## Positive Ageing

Greenlink was pleased to host a group of keen gardeners during the City of Whitehorse Seniors Festival to support Positive Ageing.

The visit consisted of an excellent cuttings and propagation demonstration by our expert Graham Hodgson (pictured with volunteers), followed by a tour of the Nursery which comprised a start-to-finish explanation of seed collection through to planting, and of course our usual sumptuous morning tea.

We would like to thank the City of Whitehorse for involving us, and of course Graham for his contribution and expertise.



Image: Trevor Eddy

“The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul”

ALFRED AUSTIN

## Happy Customers

City of Monash has commenced a plant education program specifically for their Chinese Community and have selected Greenlink to provide plants to get these residents started.

The group pictured below were the first to redeem their vouchers, and with the help of Jessica (left) our Interpreter, and Trevor (middle) they left very happy with plants in hand.



Image: Trevor Eddy



Image: Canva.com



Image: Canva.com

## Book Review

BY AUGUSTINE DORONILA

I have just read a recently published book (September 2024) entitled *Good Nature* by Kathy Willis. (In my words: how seeing, touching, smelling plants, listening to nature and also an unknown sense not only makes you feel better but actually heals you of certain illnesses).

Kathy was the former director of science at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in London and current professor of biodiversity at St Edmund Hall, University of Oxford. Her new book is a very readable account about the emerging science of how nature can improve our health.

Kathy has unpacked various research studies which we can then practically apply to our daily life. For example, we learn that increasing our daily exposure to plants by even small amounts can make a significant difference to our well-being.

She unpacks a medical research paper from 1984 entitled “View through a window may influence recovery from surgery”. It describes how following gall bladder surgery, patients who could see natural landscape scenery from their hospital window recovered three times faster and needed far less pain medication than those who only looked out over a brick wall.

Another study she cited was entitled “Human Brain Activity and Emotional Responses to Plant Colour Stimuli” where the researchers measure the brain activity via an Electroencephalogram of participants who were looking at different coloured flowers, and reported that yellow ones boosted productivity and creative thinking.

Yet another study showed that the aroma of roses is not only soothing, but it has also been shown to improve the driving skills of people because they were relaxed, less reckless and less likely to crash. A study in Japan found that roses in the workplace helped employees feel calmer.

Delving through these pioneering studies was a tipping point for Willis, eventuating in her Eureka moment which she admitted has changed her life, and as a consequence she wanted to share this awareness so we can improve our lives.

## Calling All Book Reviewers!

If you have a favourite book within the environmental or horticultural sphere, and you'd like to share it with our readers, we would love to hear from you.

Write your book review and email it to [greenlinkboxhill@gmail.com](mailto:greenlinkboxhill@gmail.com) with the title: Newsletter Book Review.

*'A game-changer ... Beautifully written, masterfully explained'*  
Isabella Tree, bestselling author of *Wilding*

# good nature

The New Science  
of How Nature  
Improves Our Health

**KATHY WILLIS**  
PROFESSOR OF BIODIVERSITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

BLOOMSBURY



## Book Review.....cont

As a botanist I know that scents can be a very important feature to identify smelling plants. I think we all feel good when we smell nice plant perfumes. Smell was a completely unknown sense to me. I mean, flowers smell nice, but that is as far as I give credit to plants. Willis, however, recounts a study in which they measured a plant scent in several persons breath and then when it passed across their lung membrane, and they were able to detect some of those scent molecules that pass into their blood.

Many plant scents are now being shown to affect biochemical pathways in the same way as a therapeutic drug, and they can have long-lasting beneficial effects.

Willis writes a chapter on tree hugging. She said no one has so far dared to research this topic but it could be just a matter of time. She has compelling evidence that warrants further inquiry. There is behavioural research that showed the blood pressure of people was lowered when they touched wood compared to when they stroked other materials. Different types of wood produced different responses, which is possibly to do with their varied structure. Just think of the difference between various pine and eucalyptus wood. Moreover, she quoted a study that if our feet touch wood, it can make us calmer.

Various studies compared children in the classroom actually planting real plants with children playing a game of planting plants on a smartphone. Guess what! The children performed better academically after touching the real plants and they also said that they felt calmer and happier.

Willis provocatively suggests that there is an unknown sense. One that she defines as receptive to the environmental microbiome. In other words, all the bugs, bacteria and viruses in the atmosphere surrounding us. The more biodiverse an area, the higher the level of diversity of the environmental microbiome.

She quotes research which showed that after 14 days of playing in a playground of soil from a cold forest of the northern hemisphere, preschool children had characteristically similar microbiome on their skin and in their gut, to that of the soils. And they had fewer inflammatory markers in their blood, indicating an enhanced immune system.

Curiously she also described a study in adults who had a green wall in their office for 28 days. They as well had more good bacteria on their skin and in their gut and had greatly reduced inflammatory markers in their blood.

## The Wrap-Up

Kathy Willis is an excellent communicator, and she is motivational in putting across the message that we as individuals can harness the health boosting benefits of nature.

She is already saying that we can take matters into our own hands, rather than expecting urban planners and politicians to create more green spaces for us.

In closing I found *Good Nature* to be a good read with practical suggestions, from going on a daily 20 minute nature walk - the sweet spot to make us healthier, to gardening without gloves so we stimulate our immune systems, and putting ornamental plants in your front gardens as they have a greater impact on our mental health than our veggie gardens.

It is highly recommended for your summer reading, or as a present to detox people from their technology addiction!



# President's Report

BY ROBERT JONES

With the year drawing to a close and summer rapidly with us from recent hot and dry conditions, we are all looking to the heavens for some long days of soaking rain which now seems to be a thing of the past, and our gardens and parkland areas are rapidly browning off and drying out.

Once again we have had another busy quarter at the nursery, with three highly successful sale days, the Whitehorse Spring Festival where we partnered with Bungalook Nursery to give away 1,400 free plants, visits to the nursery by various community groups, and a couple of presentations by Greenlink to some of our community organisations.

December is looking just as busy, with a seminar at the beginning of the month for around 40 people, presented by one of our volunteers Dr Augustine Doronila on how trees drink water. We are also about to have around 80 students from Kerrimuir Primary school visit us for a morning.

The highlight of this quarter was being awarded The Whitehorse Business Group "Excellence Award Community" for recognition of our community activities. We were nominated for the award by one of our customers, which is very gratifying.

All these activities, along with the regular weekly operations of the nursery, makes sure we are all kept busy growing our indigenous plants and getting them out into the community.

Earlier this year we applied for a community grant at the suggestion of the North East Link Authority. Committee decided that such a grant could be best used to install permanent shade sails over the concrete area in front of the shed/polyhouse.

The grant would cover the costs of this project, which is estimated to be around \$25,000. These shade sails would give better year-round protection to our volunteers and customers, and improve the amenity of the nursery.

On Friday 29th November we received the great news that our grant has been approved!! We are hoping that the sails will be installed early in the New Year.

## Gall-Inducing Insects

Have you seen these lumps and bumps on the foliage of some of your native plants, particularly eucalypts and wattles?

These galls are caused by insects such as wasps, beetles, mites and moths laying eggs in the plant tissue, which causes abnormal growths in various shapes and sizes.

Although healthy plants shouldn't be affected too badly by these galls which need the plant to survive and act as a food source for the larvae in the gall, by encouraging backyard biodiversity ie. having birds, lizards and beneficial insects in your garden, you can help to keep the bugs that cause galls under control!!





## President's Report cont.....

The nursery is still operating at capacity with plants going out the gate as fast as we can grow them, and we apologise if some of our plants are out of stock from time to time. We move into the New Year with a full order book up to late autumn and there seems to be a never ending amount of emails requesting substantial numbers of plants to be supplied, sometimes well beyond our capacity. This situation is similar to several other community indigenous nurseries, where they are also flat out meeting demand. There is now far more public awareness of our environment and the important role of planting indigenous plants back into the community.

We move into the New Year in a strong position, with a fantastic group of volunteers doing incredible work in the nursery and also outside in the adjacent parkland, where many hundreds of plants have been planted, transforming the area. Fingers crossed that with a bit of watering they can get through what looks like being a hot and dry summer.

In closing I take this opportunity to give my sincere thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers for their efforts over the past 12 months, and to wish everyone a safe and prosperous festive season and an amazing 2025, full of joy and happiness.



## Treasurer's Report

BY TREVOR EDDY

We have seen a very positive start to this financial year despite us making further capital improvements to our watering system over the new bench space.

Added to this we have completely refurbished our toilet, installing a higher seat along with hot and cold water inside the cubicle.

Sales are already well up on last year in all revenue streams, which places us in a good position to meet all of our commitments and make some additional investments for our future. Expenses are in line with budget expectations.

## Hands-On Learning

An information session lead by Jenny McCausland and Trevor Eddy was held for our volunteers at the end of November, providing valuable hands-on learning about electric tools.

Everyone had the opportunity to insert the batteries, try out each tool, and gain insights on how to clean up afterwards.

It was a very useful session, and now means those volunteers who took part feel confident to use them.



Images: Janet Russell





Image: Canva.com

# Avian Influenza

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Avian Influenza, or bird flu, is an infectious disease of birds caused by strains of Influenza A virus. It affects poultry and wild birds and can be spread to mammals including humans. The H5N1 strain is a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) being closely monitored by Australian authorities due to the potential risk of spread to Australia.

Large-scale outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of bird flu in the past two years have killed millions of wild birds and tens of thousands of mammals around the world. H5N1 bird flu has spread to all continents apart from Australia and experts predict it could arrive here with the spring migration of shorebirds and seabirds from the Northern Hemisphere.

An outbreak of H5N1 in Australian birds could be catastrophic, as one in six Australian birds are already facing the threat of extinction.

What are the symptoms of bird flu in birds?

Numerous dead birds in a location, including small groups or clusters (five or more) of wild birds of any species could be a sign that H5N1 has infected local populations and should be reported. Individual dead birds, or fewer than five sick or dead wild birds, should be reported if they are seabirds, waterbirds, shorebirds or birds of prey.

In individual birds, warning signs that should be reported include:

- a lack of coordination, tremors, swimming in circles
- twisted neck or other abnormal posture
- inability to stand or fly
- diarrhoea
- difficulty breathing, coughing or sneezing
- swelling around the head, neck and eyes
- cloudiness or change in colour of the eyes
- sudden death.

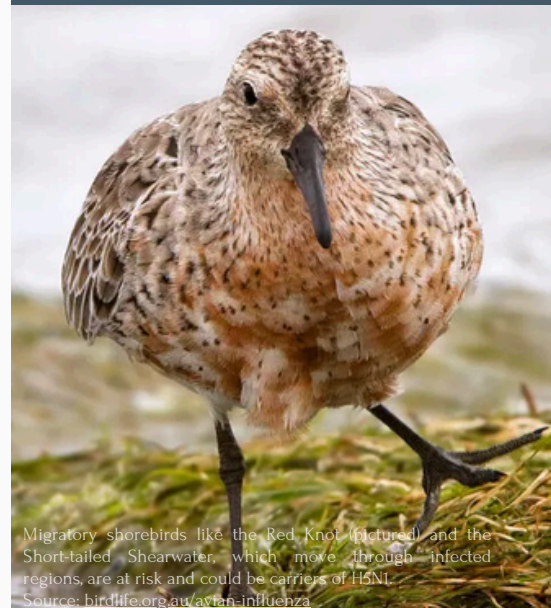
The above information is sourced from BirdLife Australia, and you can read more from them [here](#) or the latest update from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) [here](#)

# What Should I Do If I See Or Find A Sick Or Dead Bird?

**AVOID** contact with sick or dead wildlife and their environment. Do not allow pets to touch or eat sick or dead wildlife.

**RECORD** what you see, the location the animal was found, and take photos or video if this is possible without approaching the bird.

**REPORT** any unusual illness or death in wild birds and other wildlife immediately via the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.



Migratory shorebirds like the Red Knot (pictured) and the Short-tailed Shearwater, which move through infected regions, are at risk and could be carriers of H5N1. Source: [birdlife.org.au/avian-influenza](http://birdlife.org.au/avian-influenza)





## Volunteers at Work

As the weather begins to warm up, our Park team has been hard at work in the parkland next to the nursery.

If you haven't stopped by recently, take some time to stroll along the Bushy Creek Trail and see how beautiful our garden beds are looking - it's a great way to gain inspiration for your own garden!



Above: Volunteers Zena and Elspeth digging up native grasses for transplanting

Below: Volunteers Janet and Andrew transplanting native grasses



Images: Jenny McCausland

## Be a Greenlink Volunteer in 2025!!

Do you have a New Year's Resolution for 2025 yet?

Perhaps you might consider dedicating a few hours each week to volunteer with us.

We'd particularly love to hear from you if you have skills or experience in the following areas:

- Plant Propagation
- Finance
- OHS

Become part of a great community of like-minded people who enjoy the physical, social, and mental health benefits of spending time together, amongst our beautiful indigenous plants.

Your support will help us continue to be an important part of our local community.

Get in touch with us at [greenlinkboxhill@gmail.com](mailto:greenlinkboxhill@gmail.com)



Image: Canva.com



# How To Make A Pond In A Wine Barrel

BY JANET RUSSELL

First you need to decide if you are going to use a pond insert or not – if you do decide to, go straight to step 5.

1. Choose your wine barrel carefully – you want the wood to look like there aren't any large gaps between the slats. The wood will expand as it wets, but some barrels will have large gaps if the wood has really dried out a lot, and those probably won't hold water.

2. Level your spot and fill the barrel with water to the point it starts either leaking a lot, or to overflow (make sure you put the overflow where you want the water to go. At this point you don't have to be very exact with the levelling as there is likely to be some compaction and settling of the soil.

3. Revisit your barrel over the next few days and keep topping it up until it will hold water almost to the overflow.

4. Clean your barrel – I use bicarb soda first – rubbed on then dissolved in hot water to 1/3 full and topped with cold, then left to sit overnight, followed by citric acid – same procedure. This gets rid of any mould and then neutralizes it. You might not need to do this step if your water seems odour free and clear.

5. Check your levels and relevel if necessary by checking where the pond overflows first. It should overflow from the overflow point. Empty the pond.

6. Using garden soil, or a combination of soil, and any of spent potting mix, clay and/or aquasoil, spread a layer of about 3cm in the base of the barrel. Top this with sand (the Walstead method) and you can add scoria or gravel as well, as an extra layer to provide more space for beneficial bacteria to grow.

7. I usually put hydroponic, pond, or other pots with suitable holes on top of this mix and the plants will gradually grow into the soil under the sand barrier, but you may choose to plant directly into the soil – carefully so as not to disturb the barrier. In fact I usually start all my plants on bricks.

8. Lay bricks in a pattern to suit where your plants that will be submerged will go, and where your marginals that need a bit of soil above the water line will go. There are more bricks in this example that I would usually use in a barrel pond, because this one is to display as many kinds of plants as possible. It is fine to have bricks and fish: your fish can use the space between the bricks to escape from birds.



All Images: Janet Russell



## How To Make A Pond In A Wine Barrel...cont

9. Rinse off your scoria and fill pots 2/3 with it. Put your plants in and continue to fill with scoria to the last 5cm or so. Fill this with potting mix or soil and top with sand or gravel and sand. (Water lilies and Ornduffia need a bit more soil and preferably some clay if you have some on hand.)

10. Place your pots on the bricks. I like to position my aquatic plants on two bricks stacked horizontally. This puts the plants close to water level. As the plants grow I remove the bricks until they are resting on the sand/gravel at the base of the pond. Plants that have been growing above water level can get a bit of transplant shock when moved into the water and this can be lessened by lowering them gradually.

11. Position some branches so any frogs or insects have a way of getting both in and out of the water.

12. Carefully fill with water so you don't disturb the base or the pots. I usually start with a low flow and 'shower' setting on the hose. As it fills you may increase the flow a bit more and direct the water down the side of the barrel. Fill to overflow and send any material that has floated to the surface: bits of leaves, sandy scum etc. out of the pond. The water should now be fairly clear. This is the time to add water primer and beneficial bacteria if you wish to add fish.

13. To avoid mosquitoes there are a few good techniques: use a little solar fountain or add fish – but wait a few weeks before doing so as the chemicals in the soil will change the chemicals in the water until the system stabilises.

Southern pygmy perch are native to this area and three of them will eat the mosquito larvae. You won't see them though as they are very well camouflaged. If you want to keep fish you can see I'd recommend Japanese Rice Fish (Medaka Fish) or White Cloud Mountain Minnows – neither of which are native, although some people have success with native Pacific Blue Eyes. Galaxias probably need flow, rather than still water. A few pond snails are also a good idea (there are some native ones but the invasives have naturalised in our waterways in Melbourne).

After 6 months you can also consider adding some Glass Shrimp, also native to this area, which eat algae and other pond matter. If you want to see your shrimp you could add Cherry Shrimp, not natives, in warm weather.



All images: Janet Russell

The sunnier your pond location the more algae is likely to grow. There are lots of ways to address this but including many plants such as 'hungry' Juncus and/or Carex, adding some floating plants, beneficial bacteria, and fish, are my preferred methods. Using the bog filter method is another good method if you want to have a pump and flow.

I recommend having a look at the [Ozponds](http://Ozponds) website and videos, which I've found very informative and helpful for setting up and managing ponds and bog filters.



Image: Canva.com

## This Is How We Roll.....

### NOVEMBER SALE DAY RISES TO THE OCCASION

We had an absolute blast at our November Sale Day with our amazing customers!

On the morning of the sale, our Vice-President Emi participated in her regular volunteering activity at the Box Hill Community Bakehouse Food Rescue and, lo and behold, there was a mountain of leftover bread!

Naturally, Emi scooped some up and whisked it over to Greenlink to share the carb love.

As customers purchased their lovely plants, we offered them some free bread - whether it was baguettes, sourdough, or rolls!

The enthusiasm was infectious, and one of our fabulous customers even took to Facebook to share the love with this post:



Cam Ryan is with Greenlink Box Hill Inc. at Greenlink Box Hill Inc. 6h · Melbourne, VIC · 🌐 The volunteers and plants at Greenlink are always great but today I got a bonus baguette with my tube stock. Eating and gardening - can life get better? 😊

## 2024 Australian Insect of the Year

### DID YOU VOTE IN THE INAUGURAL ABC POLL?

A cute, vividly coloured native bee with a very distinctive buzz is the ABC's first Australian Insect of the Year.

The blue-banded bee (*Amegilla cingulata*) won from a field of six insect finalists selected by an expert panel.

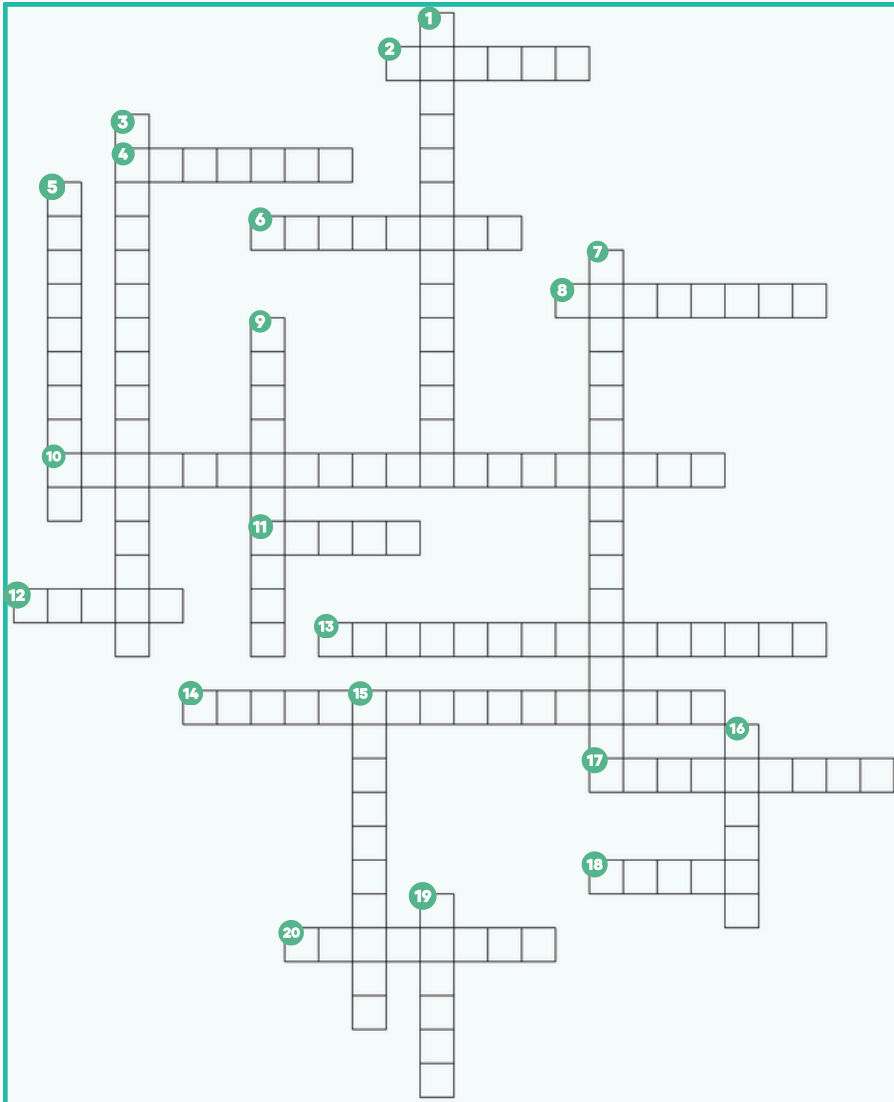
The win serves to highlight all other native bees and insects that are just as important to the ecosystem and the roles they play, such as pollination, predation of pests, or decomposition of leaf litter and forest floor vegetation.

You can see the final results [here](#)



## Hey Kids....

Test your detective skills, and have a go at our Australian Wildlife crossword. How many can you guess from the clues below?



### ACROSS

2. My call is iconic but you may not like me in September
4. Ants are my absolute favourite
6. I am a master mimic
8. I'm a great underwater swimmer, yet I also have a bill
10. You'll see my colours in the AFL but I'd prefer to stay hidden in the undergrowth
11. Who needs the Easter Bunny!
12. Do you think I look good in spots?
13. I'm blue and I'm fabulous!
14. My call has been described as a creaky door
17. I have wings that shimmer
18. I really like to eat only one thing
20. Watch me box on with my mates

### DOWN

1. I am considered an apex predator in Tasmania
3. I'm well known as the king of the skies
5. Laugh with me
7. Sometimes I poke my tongue out if I am threatened
9. I am sometimes called a Banjo
15. I'm even cuter than a mouse
16. My poo is square
19. I've been called a rat, but I'm so much cooler than that!

## Insect Intel

### GREEN GRASS-DART

This butterfly is referred to as a skipper and can be found in eastern and southern Australia.

It displays a distinctive wing position when resting on a perch, such as the leaf shown in the image below.

Skippers typically reside in grassy habitats, where they lay their eggs so the larvae can then feed on grasses.

The adults feed on small herbaceous flowers and native plants.

Keep an eye out for them in your garden!





## Greenlink Box Hill Inc. is now on **LinkedIn**

For those members on LinkedIn, you can now join and follow us using this link [Greenlink Box Hill Inc](#)

At Greenlink Box Hill we value:

- Every customer who deals with us.
- A happy, safe, and enthusiastic workplace that embraces all volunteers and makes them feel welcome, respected, and honoured.
- The high quality of our plants.
- The contribution that everyone makes to our success.
- Honesty and ethics in all of our dealings with customers and each other.



Greenlink Box Hill Inc. Reg No. A0018547D

President: Robert Jones

Vice-President: Emi Luppino

Secretary: Chris Almond

Treasurer: Trevor Eddy

Committee Members: Andrew Hardie,

Heather Eadon, Janet Russell, Gabrielle Bradley

Newsletter Editor: Gabrielle Bradley

### BE A CONTRIBUTOR

If you have any stories, news, photos, or an upcoming event that you would like to share with Greenlink for publication in our next newsletter, please write to the editor at [greenlinkboxhill@gmail.com](mailto:greenlinkboxhill@gmail.com)

## GOOD TO KNOW

The nursery will be closed from 19th December 2024, and will reopen on 7th January 2025.

**Regular open days:**  
Tuesdays & Wednesdays  
9.00 am - 12.00 pm

**Saturday sales days:**  
29 March 2025  
26 April 2025

### Contact:

[greenlinkboxhill@gmail.com](mailto:greenlinkboxhill@gmail.com)

0479 121 653

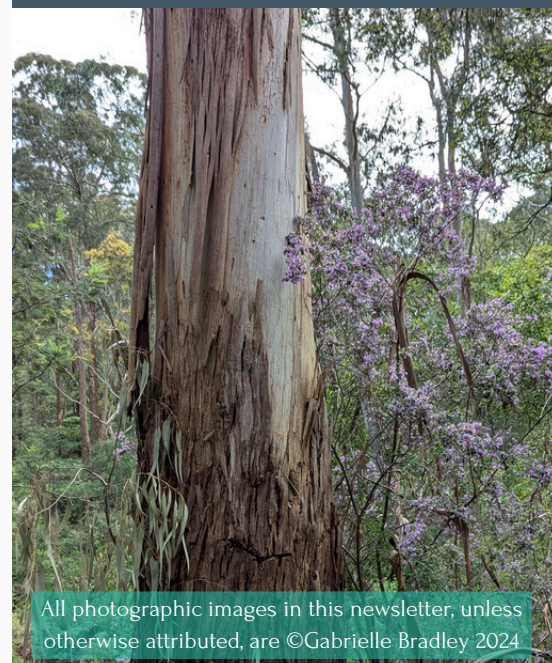
(Answered 9am - 12pm Tues & Wed only)

### Visit:

41 Wimmera Street,  
Box Hill North 3129

[www.greenlinkboxhill.org](http://www.greenlinkboxhill.org)

[www.facebook.com/GreenlinkNursery](https://www.facebook.com/GreenlinkNursery)



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