

Sources of Silver Banksia, Sweet Bursaria and Drooping Sheoak on the basalt plains and junctions with other land systems in SW Victoria

Rod Bird, April 2015

ORIGINAL DISTRIBUTION

There are many early reports of the occurrence of these species on the plains of SW Victoria. A few accounts are presented below:

George Augustus Robinson (1841-1843):

- 7 May 1841 – ‘Took a route...to Forlonge’s station [Mt Rouse to Lake Linlithgow and Grange Burn]...through a beautiful undulating country covered with dwarf banksias, gums, cherry tree and well grassed...the vast downs to the NW and NE thinly studded with dwarf trees [banksia]....’ (Presland 1977 No. 6)
- 30 June 1841– [describing land between the Grange and Mt Abrupt] – *open downs thinly studded with lightwood, banksia, cherry tree and well grassed*’ (Presland 1977 No. 6).
- 30 June 1841– [from Dairy Station near Branxholme to Wannan] – ‘In my way from Arren.doo.rong... came upon extensive open downs on the banks of the Grange Burn. The land was undulating and thinly covered with dwarf trees, the banksia, eucalyptus and lightwood prevailed and cherry also...’ (Presland 1980, No.11)
- May 1841 – [meeting Aborigines at ‘The Great Swamp’ (Buckley Swamp) near Mt Napier] – ‘It was an interesting sight to see all these people [Tappoc Conedeet clan] grouped around me, under the umbrageous branches of 2 fine banksia...’ (Presland 1977 No. 6).
- March 1842 – Hunter’s [a few km south of Mt Napier] to Port fairy – *the country consisted of open forest: well grassed, trees stunted banksia – which prevailed – stunted gum with mixture of cherry tree & mannar & shee oak*’ (ID Clark 1988).
- April 1843 – Banksia called *Weerrite* by the natives of *Calorer*. [Mt Rouse]. The flower cones sucked or soaked in water and mixed with gum to make a sweet drink. ‘From *Calorer* came to *Burchell’s* [‘The Gums’]...proceeded to *Gibb’s Hopkins* [‘Bolac Plains’] ‘the country was plains with dwarf banksia. This species is low and thin and is fast decaying or being blown by rain and will ere long be like other portions, treeless’ (ID Clark 1988).

Robinson commented often about “stunted Banksia” that he saw at many areas on the plains near Hamilton, Peshurst and further south and east:

- G. Presland (1977) Records of the Victorian Archaeological Society No. 6 *Journals of George Augustus Robinson March-May 1841*
- G Pressland (1980) Records of the Victorian Archaeological Society No. 11 *Journals of G.A. Robinson May to August 1841*
- Ian D. Clark 1988 Monash Publications in Geography No.34 *The Port Phillip Journals of George Augustus Robinson 8March-7April and 18March-29April 1843.*

Surveyor Tyers (1839) 5 March:

- ‘Between Mounts Shadwell and Rouse...prevailing timber consists of banksiae, casuarina, eucalyptus, exocarpos cupressiformis and lightwood’.
- ‘Between the Grange Burn and Portland Bay are thick forests of eucalypti, casuarinae strictae...and here and there a myrtus australis [Bursaria spinosa] ...’

Hamilton Spectator (1886) 26 Nov:

- ‘Basset estate...Branxholme...the whole area was heavily timbered with gum and honeysuckle [Banksia] with a large proportion of splendidly grown wattle [A. mearnsii] growing on the river slopes...for every wattle tree they stripped they should ring an adjacent gum or honeysuckle...falling the honeysuckles proved too expensive and eventually ringing was adopted...the honeysuckle on this patch stood as thick as they could grow, and visitors to the station...would hardly credit that this was ever the case’.
- ‘Having a very clear recollection of the property [visited 16 years ago]...I was not prepared for the transformation...the forests have almost disappeared...whilst the honeysuckles have vanished, root and branch’.

Thomas Mitchell (1836)

- An engraving of a scene at the summit of Mt Napier indicates presence of sheoak.

John Anderson, Willaura farmer, Feb 2002 (comments by John at a CMA Groundwater Systems tour):

- An 1870s photo of the landscape between Mt Stavely and the Grampians shows an extensive woodland with sheoaks singly and in groups of 2-6 trees spaced an average of perhaps 20 m apart. The trees occurred right across the landscape to the lakes. There were some dead trees and logs and some stumps, cut off at about 2 foot high. No regeneration is evident and there did not appear to be any eucalypts. (this photo was retrieved from a pile of rubbish when offices at the Ararat Shire were cleaned out a few years ago).

CURRENT STANDS OF THE THREE SPECIES

Bursaria spinosa

- Hensley Park Rd and adjacent paddocks about 4 km from Hamilton
- Picnic Rd at Tarrington,
- Land adjacent to Old Lutheran Cemetery and RMIT on Chatsworth Rd in Hamilton,
- Banks on the north shore of Lake Linlithgow (off North Lakes Rd),
- Banks of the Wannon River at various places
- Mount Napier State Park (Cole Track is a convenient site)
- Wannon Falls Scenic Reserve (planted site – see below).
- Kanawalla Rail Res (planted site – see below)
- PVI (Dept Agric) – Dam area west of buildings on entry lane (planted site see below)
- Old Reservoir in the Hamilton Community Parkland

The Hensley Park Rd source is quite abundant but mainly in private land adjacent to the road (north side, about 1 km from the last houses on the edge of town).

In 1990, 190 seedlings from Hamilton Grange Burn were planted on the east bank about 80 m south of Linlithgow Lane.

From 2003 there was extensive planting by HFNC of Sweet Bursaria on the banks of Lake Linlithgow and the seedlings were produced from the shrubs growing on the banks of the north shore. In 2003, 370 seedlings were planted by HFNC on the high bank section west of the inlet on North Lake Rd.

Sweet Bursaria was planted by HFNC in the Kanawalla Rail Flora Reserve between Mcfarlanes Rd and Forts Rd. in 2006 (74 seedlings from Lake Linlithgow) and 2007 (8 plants from Linlithgow).

Sweet Bursaria planted by HFNC at Wannon Falls Scenic Res old pine site in 1999 – 200 plants from local Wannon River upstream from old Wannon bridge.

Seven clumps of Sweet Bursaria, each containing about 12 trees were planted in 2000 on a tough clay bank on the dam site at PVI but over 50% survived. The seed came from the Wannon.

Silver Banksia

- Yatchaw Railway Reserve – possibly 30 trees there
- Purdeet Rail Reserve siding south of Penshurst – a dozen or more trees
- Hawkesdale Rail Reserve north of town – several hundred trees
- Hamilton-Portland rail line, east of Portland road crossing (a few may still be surviving)
- Old Reservoir in Hamilton Community Parklands – a few trees present
- Wannon Flora Res (not a basalt plains site) – a few dozen trees present
- Cavendish (Henty Highway, south of the town) – a dozen or more trees
- ‘Brie Brie’ bush, Glenthompson area
- Nigretta Flora Res (upstream end on north side – not basalt plains) – a a small grove
- Wannon River upstream from Four Posts (east bank) – extensive groves on slope
- Strathkellar Rd near Glenelg Highway intersection – sand sheet over basalt
- Lake Linlithgow (planted sites – see below)
- PVI (Dept Agric) – Dam area west of buildings on entry lane (planted site see below)

Silver Banksia was planted by HFNC in the Kanawalla Rail Flora Reserve between Mcfarlanes Rd and Forts Rd. in 2006 (50 seedlings from Yatchaw and 22 from Hawkesdale). In 2007 a further 77 banksia were planted (about equal numbers from Yatchaw and Hawkesdale).

In 1991, 80 Silver Banksias from Yatchaw seed were planted by HFNC on the east bank Lake Linlithgow. Earlier, in 1975, 20 trees from Wail Nursery were planted on the east side, opposite Linlithgow Lane and a few survived. In 1977, 13 plants from 'local seed' (identity now unknown) were also planted there.

In 2003, 150 seedlings from Yatchaw were planted by HFNC on the high bank section west of the inlet on North Lake Rd. In 2004, 50 trees from Yatchaw were also planted on that site. In 2005, 25 trees from Yatchaw were planted on the west side of Linlithgow (adjacent on the south side to the access lane off West Lake Rd).

PV also planted 1290 Silver Banksia from Yatchaw around Lake Linlithgow (Liz Fenton supplier):

- 27.10.2003 *B. marginata* Yatchaw 350 seedlings
- 09.09.2004 *B. marginata* Yatchaw 250 seedlings
- 26.10.2004 *B. marginata* Yatchaw 200 seedlings
- 22.05.2005 *B. marginata* Yatchaw 440 seedlings
- 08.10.2005 *B. marginata* Yatchaw 50 seedlings

Silver Banksia from Yatchaw was planted in 2003 in several clumps at the PVI dam site (adjacent to the entry driveway).

Drooping Sheoak

- Wannon Flora Res – north edge (not on basalt plains)
- Nigretta Falls Scenic Reserve – high bank above falls (not on basalt plains)
- Four Posts Streamside Reserve (not on basalt plains)
- Hamilton Old Reservoir in Hamilton Community Parkland – a large, old stand
- Isolated trees in Tarrington area
- Summit of Mt Eccles (a few straggly trees still exist there)
- Tarrington area – a few trees at various place along roads
- Glenelg Highway west from Hamilton, at intersection with Chadderton Rd
- Lake Linlithgow (extensive planted sites with mostly Yatchaw seedlings –see below)
- Kanawalla Rail Reserve (planted site – see below)
- PVI (Dept Agric) – dam area west of buildings on entry lane (planted site see below)

From 1994 to 1998, 160 sheoak from Wannon Flora Res were planted on the Wannon Falls Scenic Res, on an old pine plantation site adjacent to Morgiana Rd.

Drooping Sheoak was planted by HFNC in the Kanawalla Rail Flora Reserve between Mcfarlanes Rd and Forts Rd. in 2006, 142 plants (100 from Nth Hamilton Rail Res & 42 from Old Reservoir). In 2007, 87 trees were planted (Nth Hamilton Rail Res)

In 1990, 100 Drooping Sheoak from "seed collected locally" were planted by HFNC on the east bank of Lake Linlithgow. In 1975, 20 trees from Wail were planted on east side, opp. Linlithgow Lane and some survived. In 1977, 13 plants from 'local seed' (identity now unknown) were also planted there.

In 2004, 160 sheoaks from a mixed collection from 4 trees around Tarrington were planted by HFNC on the North Lakes Rd site. In 2005 another 80 trees were planted there and 25 trees on the west side of Linlithgow (adjacent on the south side to the access lane off West Lake Rd).

Roadside planting of sheoak among 20 clumps of trees on the Glenelg Highway from Hamilton to Howlett Rd east of Wickliffe derive from planting in 1993 by HFNC. The seed source was Wickliffe. In all, 184 sheoak were planted.

Drooping Sheoak seedlings were planted in clumps at PVI dam site in 2001. The seed was collected from the remnant stand at the Old Reservoir, Hamilton.