

# Friends Of Willow Park Inc.



Educating and involving the community in protecting, preserving and valuing parklands

## NEWSLETTER – March 2009

### Community gardening in Willow Park

Community gardening in the park is about residents socialising and sharing in the creation, maintenance and rewards of caring for our park. Friends of Willow Park hosts community gardening in the park each month (between March and December). Together, we care for the newly planted trees and shrubs – staking, weeding, mulching and mowing.

Come and join in! Bring your own wheelbarrow, garden fork, and spade – or use ours. Thanks to a Commonwealth grant we have recently purchased a brush-cutter, whipper-snipper and protective gear.

### Next Community Gardening in the Park & Waterwatch

**Sunday 26 April & 24 May**

**Community gardening in the park  
1.30 pm**

**Waterwatch:  
3.30 pm**

**BYO refreshments, sunscreen, hat  
Meet near the BBQ area in Willow Park**

**Phone Pauline – 6056 6275  
or Ali - 0409 032 490**

### Next Information Evening

#### **Fire ecology and living with fire – what have we learned?**

#### **Guest Speaker – Dr Brian Lord**

Dr Brian Lord recently retired from Charles Sturt University, Albury, where he had been the Head of the School of Environmental and Information Sciences. Brian's areas of expertise are fire ecology and vegetation ecology and management.

Brian will talk about fire ecology and share his educated understanding of what happened in Victoria on 7 February 2009 and what measures we might take to limit the impacts of such a fire.

**When?** Thursday 16 April 2009

**What time?** 7.30 p.m.

**Where?** Belvoir School, 4 Bowman Court, Wodonga

**Light supper provided**

**Further information:** Contact Alison on 6056 1938 or email [president@friendsofwillowpark.org.au](mailto:president@friendsofwillowpark.org.au)

Patrons: Professor David Mitchell, Professor Allan Curtis, Dr Juliet Bird

Postal Address: c/- P.O. Box 1083, Wodonga, 3689

Website: [www.friendsofwillowpark.org.au](http://www.friendsofwillowpark.org.au)

Phone: Julie: (02)6056 1787, Ali (02) 6056 1938

## Dean Twist – Our Guest Speaker in February

Dean Twist gave a wonderful and very up-to-date and topical presentation on climate change to the large crowd at our February Information Evening.

Dean began with an old Chinese proverb – ‘one generation plants the trees, another gets the shade’ – reminding us of our responsibilities to future generations – and the need for this generation to act NOW for the good of future generations.

He then went on to outline the potential impacts of climate change – globally, nationally and locally. He gave us a layman summary of a number of important reports and presented graphed data so that we could easily see the areas in which we, Australia, are releasing the majority of our greenhouse gas emissions.

Knowing the areas of greatest impact is an important tool in knowing what areas we need to target to minimise our impact. For example, Australia’s largest greenhouse gas emissions are from the production of coal-based electricity. By minimising our coal-based electricity production and consumption we will make a large contribution to the solution of climate change. One way to do this is to switch to solar.

This is just one example of the many important topics Dean covered during his fascinating and informative presentation. Other things discussed included: the need for a mix of solutions to climate change; the National emissions target and trading; and the urgent need for strong leadership and action.

We also discussed what we can do as individuals and community groups. One local group that is already on the job is WATCH (Wodonga and Albury Towards Climate Health). For more information about WATCH and how you can get involved, contact Jenny Davies by emailing: [colesdavies@hotmail.net.au](mailto:colesdavies@hotmail.net.au)



The large crowd at our February Information Evening listening intently to the fascinating and informative presentation on climate change by Dean Twist

## Planning Our Activities and Strategies for 2009

Members are invited to a planning evening to discuss ideas for the group’s activities and priorities for the coming 12 months

**When?** Tues 7 April

**Where?** Belvoir School, Bowman Court, Wodonga

**What time?** 7.30 p.m. – 9 p.m.

**RSVP:** Julie – 6056 1787 or [president@friendsofwillowpark.org.au](mailto:president@friendsofwillowpark.org.au)

## Our re-vamped web site



Please send us your feedback on our website and don’t forget to look through the photo gallery.

## Lounging on High

Friends of Willow Park showcased its activities at Lounging on High on Friday 20 February.

We had a range of fun activities for children, all of which were enjoyed immensely. Using nets, eye droppers and magnifying glasses, children searched for water bugs; identifying the ones that help to make our waterways healthy.

In the art tent, Council staff helped us provide a creative space for children to illustrate "Parks are fun". As well as traditional art materials, children used natural materials such as bark and leaves, sourced from Willow Park.

We also provided a wonderful 'get your hands dirty' area where children potted up native trees. Friends of Willow Park gave these free to children to take home to plant in their gardens.

Parents kindly gave permission for their children to be photographed – these will soon be on our web site. In the meantime, here are some samples



## A Mother's Day gift that may just keep on giving

(An article from Stuart Robertson, Weed Contact Alert Officer, Department of Sustainability and Environment)

In May 2008, several large plant retailers inadvertently stocked and sold Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*) as part of a Mother's Day promotion. Since the detection of the invasive exotic grass, investigations by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) have revealed that as many as 4000 Mexican feather grass plants may have been supplied to stores from January to May 2008.



Young Mexican feather grass in a retailer's Mothers Day promotion teacup

### **So why is Mexican feather grass so dangerous?**

If you thought Australian native plants were at the top of the class when it comes to coping with heat and drought, then think again. Mexican feather grass is a very hardy, highly aggressive competitor and is considered a far greater risk for Australia than its close weedy relative serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*). Mexican feather grass is capable of invading up to 14 million hectares of land if adequate detection and eradication measures are not undertaken. To make matters worse, Mexican feather grass is unpalatable to stock and very difficult to control.

Reflecting the serious threat from this invasive grass, it is declared under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* as a State prohibited weed. There are 25 declared State prohibited weeds, which are the highest risk weeds in the state.

### **Where were the plants being sold?**

Plants were stocked and sold by large retail chain stores Victoria, including, Albury, Wangaratta, Shepparton and Echuca. In some instances, they were mislabelled and sold under the following names: *Stipa capillata*, *Stipa lessingiana*, *Stipa capriccio*, *Stipa* Regal Sensations or Summerhill. A product recall from the stores has taken place in order to retrieve as many of the plants as possible.

### **How many plants have been retrieved in Victoria so far?**

Over 7,101 plants have been recovered from wholesalers, retail stores and private gardens across Victoria. Of most significant importance for our local area was a Wodonga backyard, detected as having an infestation of Mexican feather grass. An inspection revealed eight very large, mature Mexican feather grass plants in full seed in the garden. The grass had already spread into nearby pot plants via wind-blown seeds and was also spreading throughout the adjoining lawn area. The owner of the garden received the grasses from a relative in Melbourne, under the assumption that the plants were a type of drought resistant native grass. This is a common mistake, as Mexican feather grass can initially resemble some of our native grasses.

### **How do you identify a Mexican feather grass plant?**

Mexican feather grass is a densely tufted perennial tussock grass that grows to about 70cm high. It is distinguished by the flower and seed head. Mature plants form seed on a long flower spike. Seeds have a small pointed tip (head) and a long bent awn (tail) and resemble a large feather when clumped together at the end of a flower stem. The leaves of Mexican feather grass are needle-like and roll smoothly between the fingers; whereas many native grasses have flat leaves that clunk when rolled between the fingers (see images below).



The feathery appearance of a Mexican feather grass seed head

### **What should you do if you think you have found a Mexican feather grass plant?**

Firstly, please don't attempt to control or dispose of the weed yourself. If you think you have purchased or seen a Mexican feather grass plant, please contact Stuart Robertson at DPI Wodonga on (02) 6043 7965. If in doubt, please report the sighting – it is far better to be safe than sorry with this weed menace. The responsibility for eradication of State prohibited weeds rests with DPI, which also bears the costs of treatment and monitoring of infestation sites.

### **Want more information?**

Please call the Customer Service Centre on **136 186** or visit the DPI Weed Spotter website for updates on Mexican feather grass at:

<http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/weedspotters>

## **Master Plan for Willow Park**

*Friends of Willow Park* will continue to meet with City of Wodonga about the Master Plan in 2009. We would like to thank Johan Louw and Peter McLarty from City of Wodonga for their ongoing efforts in this process. We would also like to thank outgoing committee members Jenny Hanuska (City of Wodonga) and Jenni Huber (*Friends of Willow Park*) who have given much time, thought and effort to the process. We are very happy to welcome Wilma Kröttje (*Friends of Willow Park*) and Councillor Annie Speedie to the committee

Please contact us if you have any questions about the Master Plan or if you'd like to get involved. Otherwise - Stay tuned for more!

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## FRIENDS OF WILLOW PARK

### MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERSHIP IS FREE**  
Donations always welcome

I wish to join *Friends of Willow Park*. I agree to be bound by the rules of the Association and to support the group's objectives (below).

Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment: (circle) Cash/Cheque  
Cheques payable to: Friends of Willow Park Inc.

Receipt Number: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Send your completed form to:

Friends of Willow Park Inc.  
c/- P.O. Box 1083, Wodonga, 3689  
Email:  
[membership@friendsofwillowpark.org.au](mailto:membership@friendsofwillowpark.org.au)  
Fax: 6056 2694

#### Participating in Friends of Willow Park

*Friends of Willow Park* is an active group and we encourage you to get involved. Please indicate how you would like to participate (you can tick as many of these as you want). I would like to help out with:

- Helping with the campaigns to save Willow Park from undue development
- Being part of the Committee of Management
- Helping with the newsletter
- Walks, talks, tours, socials
- Hands-on environment projects
- Water quality testing
- Information stalls and publications
- Interest Groups
- Fundraising

#### Our Objectives

- (a) To promote the protection and preservation of Willow Park as public open space parkland;
- (b) To promote the protection and preservation of the social, economic and environmental value of Willow Park including the flora, fauna and features (scenic, archaeological, geological, historic or scientific);
- (c) To educate and inform the community about the role and value of Willow Park; and
- (d) To foster community involvement in, and enjoyment of, Willow Park in accordance with the above objectives.

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