



Dean and Ziggy's Rainforest in Burrawang

By Dean Pryke Abertillery

Establishment of Abertillery Rainforest commenced after the property in Dale Street, Burrawang was purchased in 1989. I now live on the property in a dubl-storey cottage and the back half and side boundaries were planted as temperate Coachwood rainforest commencing circa 1991.

Initially, the back half of the property had only the two existing enormous Brown Barrel trees (*Eucalyptus fastigata*) on it with an understorey of mostly weed species such as *Berberis*, English Holly, Privet and a 30cm thick carpet of *Tradescantia albiflora*. Amidst the ongoing clearing and burning off of the weed species, I commenced the rainforest plantings with ruffly fifty tubestock of Coachwood which were given to me by Randwick Council Nursery free of charge as they'd had a heavy seed drop of Coachwood that year and had excess stock. This was ideal as I specifically wanted to set up a generally Coachwood dominated rainforest. Occasional rainforest trees self-settled onto the block also at that time, these included Beefwood (*Rapanea howittiana*) and Tree Violet (*Hymenantha dentata*), a small prickly shrub that is common on the basalt soils of the Southern Highlands rainforest (historically known as Yarrowa Brush).

The timber paths (above in foto) were cut from recycled waste hardwood timber acquired from council clean-ups, etc., the old timbers were de-nailed, angle-grinded to remove paint, surface-rot, etc. and given a coat of creosote which then soaked into the timbers before the timbers were simply rubber-hammered into position. In about 2008 a simple cable-stayed suspension bridge was built to carry the path over a pond established to encourage frogs. Over the years since, the rainforest plantings continued to include *Doryfora sassafras*, *Pittosporum undulatum*, *Hymenosporum flavum*, *Brachychiton acerifolium*, *Hedecarya augustifolius*, *Cassine australe*, *Synoum glandulosum*, *Polyosma cunninghamii*, *Pennantia cunninghamii*, *Livistona australis*, *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*, *Eucryfia moorei*, *Acmena smithii*, *Toona ciliata*, *Callicoma serratifolia*, *Alectryon subcinereas*, *Tristaniopsis laurina* and a single *Elaeocarpus kirtonii*, just to name a few of the rainforest species grown with varying degrees of success.

The Brown Barrel tree at the back of the block, as enormous as it is (circa 150 feet high), has a tendency to drop massive limbs especially during droughts and this has decimated some of my rainforest trees growing directly under it, some of the trees smashed off at the base have coppiced, in particular a Bastard Rosewood tree (*Synoum glandulosum*) which had its entire 2-meter high trunk smashed off at its base and a Blueberry Ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*) has also similarly coppiced. Damaged Coachwoods there are coppicing as well as producing new shoots along their damaged trunks. When these enormous Brown Barrel branches drop, we cut up and carry out the huge limbs piece-by-piece and billet them into firewood logs and stack them to season, Brown Barrel logs season quite quickly and we've often burnt them as little as 6 months after cutting them up and splitting them green, and it smells divine when burning!

The center of the property between the rainforest on three sides and the cottage at the front is retained as a lawn for a campfire area with room for tents, any Rainforest Study Group members who are interested in seeing/staying at the property can contact myself or my partner on (02) 4886-4294 (messagebank available).

The central area also includes a stockshed, a chook area, a 2-meter wide geodesic dome used as a rainforest plant growing compound, and a washing-line designed to look like powerlines so as to blend in and not be too noticeable. The cottage itself has an English Pub lounge room to interact with guests in the evenings.

Burrawang is a village of roughly 300 people that sits on a saddle between McGraths Hill and Silver Springs Hill at 750 meters altitude above sea-level and is set amongst rolling green hills with dairying and beef cattle, potato-growing and has scenery similar to parts of England (in particular Devon) complete with 200-year-old stone walls around some of the farming areas. The geologic history of the area is volcanic (mostly basalt) and the nearby Mt. Saddleback and Mt. Cambewarra are extinct volcanoes of around 22 million years of age.

Burrawang lies about 2 kilometers south of the east-west A48 Highway and has three accesses from the highway, it can be approached from Wollongong's southern suburbs in the east, the M31 (Hume Motorway) in the West and Bowral in the North. Access from Nowra and the NSW South Coast is via B73 (Moss Vale Road) and Kangaroo Valley.

Trusting that this essay/summary is of interest to other Rainforest Study Group members.

(Some readers will notice that some of my spellings are different. That's intentional because I refuse to use "-ough" and "ph" letter combinations because they are a nonsense.)

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