

## Farm Forestry

Integrating farm forestry into properties in the Woody Yaloak catchment has the potential to provide many benefits including environmental (eg, salinity control), farm productivity (eg, shelter) and commercial (eg, sawlogs, wood chips).

### **Blue Gums: Kevin and Alice Knight at Linton**

In deep free-draining soils in 750 mm per annum rainfall areas, farm forestry can include joint-venture Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) wood chip production with a commercial forestry company. Kevin and Alice Knight at Linton have a contract with such a company. In this case the company prepares the site by ripping, mounding, spraying and hand planting using Pottiputkis, with fertiliser also applied. Weed control is carried out for the first two years and if necessary, insecticide for Autumn Gum Moth control is sprayed.

The landholder is paid an annuity which can be up to \$200 per hectare per annum on a sliding scale depending on various factors such as slope of site, soil type, distance from wood chipping facility and rainfall. Sometimes the company will offer a share of the profit at harvest commonly 10-13 years after establishment.

Kevin says that their Blue Gum block planting provides fantastic shelter for sheep off shears even after just a couple of years.

### **Longer rotation sawlogs: Bill and Marion Walton at Rokewood**

The low drought tolerance of Blue Gums means that they are not an option in lower rainfall areas (600-650 mm) with heavy basalt soils. In these areas, farm forestry using low rainfall timber species can

produce valuable sawlog products on 30 year rotations with some earlier potential products from thinnings (firewood, posts, poles). Currently, timber company support is not available for these sites.

Bill and Marion Walton have established a sawlog woodlot on their property at Rokewood that will also protect the degraded Ferrers Creek and provide shelter for the neighbouring paddocks.

The site, ranging from fifteen to twenty rows wide, was prepared by applying Spray Top the spring prior to planting and, in the next autumn and spring, was sprayed with Roundup. The planting rows were cultivated, harrowed and then re-cultivated to produce friable soil conditions to allow the use of the Bush Planter, a tractor-mounted mechanical planter provided under the Alcoa Revegetation Assistance Scheme. Bill undertook a follow up shielded spray in the following autumn with Roundup and Simazine.

Species selected, on the advice of the Department, were Sugar Gum, Southern Mahogany, Yellow Gum and Spotted Gum with River She Oak included in the first year.

All these species are to be used for high value timber products and so require form and lift pruning and thinning. Although some pruning has been undertaken, Marion feels that the on-going commitment to this management is difficult to fulfil.

The growth of the trees has been substantial and they are providing noticeable shelter for stock, crops and pasture. Fencing the creek has allowed the banks to grass up and the Waltons are monitoring the quality of the water. There has also been an increase in the birds observed with twenty-five different species recorded.

### **Michael Rowe at Wallinduc**

Michael Rowe at Wallinduc has been planting ten hectares of timber trees each year for sawlog production. His preparation includes three sprays, ripping and mounding and placing the rows four metres apart for access. The trees are planted using a Pottiputki in late winter-early spring. Michael will spray again in autumn or winter following establishment if necessary. Michael chose Sugar Gum and Spotted Gum for their timber qualities.



*Marion Walton in Woodlot.*

*Before*

### **Troy Missen at Werneth**

Troy Missen has established a couple of farm forestry plots for timber purposes on his farm at Werneth. He has planted areas of both Pine and predominantly a Sugar Gum - Black Wattle mix. In 2000/2001 Troy prepared a rocky unproductive site for planting. He first sprayed the Onion Weed in the Spring of 2000. The area was cultivated, mounded and sprayed with a Roundup - Simazine mix some weeks before planting. The Bush Planter, a mechanical planter, provided under the Alcoa Revegetation Assistance Scheme, was used to plant the seedlings.

The rows are spaced four metres apart to allow access for

overspraying which was necessary to control the phalaris. Troy planted two to three rows of Sugar Gum, selected from Lismore, and then a row of Black Wattles. The Black Wattle from NSW, selected for its performance, has grown extremely quickly. The other species used in this plot are Blackwoods and Drooping Sheoaks.

The area is providing good off shears shelter after two years and habitat for birds such as Blue Wrens. Troy will harvest the Black Wattle as thinnings for firewood with any "stag" specimen trees retained and pruned for saw logs. The thinning will release the Sugar Gums to grow on to large fat trees.

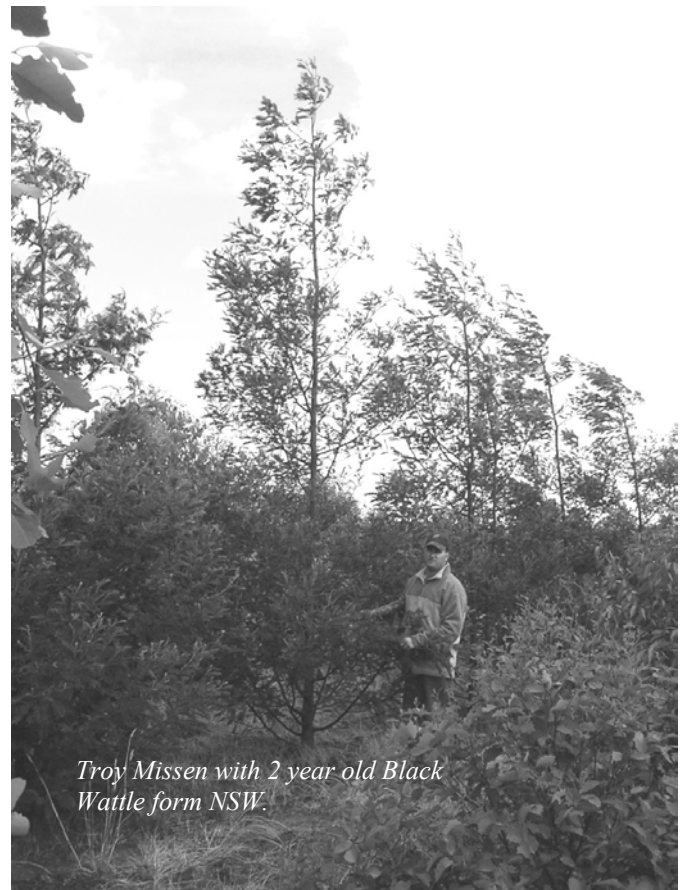
Farm forestry here is making good use of an otherwise low productive area.

**Conclusion:** Commercial, environmental and farm productivity benefits can be provided by integrating farm forestry into properties in the Woody Yaloak. Those landholders in areas suitable for Blue Gums can receive assistance with establishment as well as annual annuity income. Thorough site preparation is critical to good growth rates. Trees for sawlog production require a commitment to management - form and lift pruning and thinning.

*Some of the species used in these case studies are not indigenous to the Woody Yaloak catchment and may be environmental weeds. It is recommended to follow the species guidelines provided by the Corangamite Native Vegetation Plan and use indigenous species of the ecological vegetation class occurring in each area.*



*Troy Missen with Sugar Gums  
2 years old*



*Troy Missen with 2 year old Black  
Wattle form NSW.*

The information and opinions expressed in Fact Sheets represent actual experiences as described by those interviewed and are not to be interpreted as recommended treatments of Alcoa World Alumina or Greening Australia and may not be appropriate for all situations. Seek local area advice. Compiled by Claire Dennis.