

# MEPA NEWS



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## What does MEPA do?

MEPA (or the Mount Glorious/Mount Nebo Environment Protection Association) is a not-for-profit community organization. Although we have funding to engage contractors for weed control, the administration, monitoring, annual lobbying for funding, government and agency engagement and community engagement functions are carried out by volunteers, a number of whom also volunteer their time for on-ground work (as do the wonderful contractors).

MEPA was formed back in 1990 as a platform to allow the community to collectively address threats to the environment from inappropriate development and consider how we could reduce our own negative impacts. Out of this has grown the Weed Partnership (now in its sixth year) with several agencies providing funding for us to reduce weeds on their respective areas of responsibility – public land such as Road Reserves, Council Parks and Utility Corridors etc. across 100 km between The Gap and Wivenhoe Outlook. These areas often adjoin and hence buffer the large areas of undisturbed National Park of high conservation value. With weeds along the roads reduced, the scenic value of the Tourist Road is also improved and maintained. So far about \$400,000 has been brought into the community to carry out this project.

Controlling weeds on your own property also helps prevent re-infestation of these managed areas and allows us to make our funding go further, and MEPA is happy to advise locals on how they might do this

MEPA also exists as a panel of local experts to assist agencies to conduct their activities in a way that minimizes their impact on the local environment. We are often their “eyes on the ground”, and can alert them to inappropriate activity and community concerns. These lines of communication play an important role in curbing problems that these relatively large and remote agencies face in managing their lands.

We are able to provide input and solutions for pest management strategies and other policy while also keeping the local community informed through this publication and our free “Do Your Block”, Bushcare Consultation Service.

Membership is important for all these activities. It shows broad community support for our goals, and in an increasingly political era gives us a strong voice. So we thank the many of you who continue to support us as we continue to protect our wonderful environment. If you would like to know more or get involved, why not give us a call or come along to one of our working bees. New members or news articles are always welcome!

Dominic Hyde and Alan Carter

## Bell Miner Associated Dieback: an introduction

Bell Miner Associated Dieback (or BMAD for short) is a condition that can affect large areas of *Eucalypt* forests across Eastern Australia. It is not yet well understood and there is considerable research currently being done.

Essentially, BMAD involves the interactions of the bell bird, a particular kind of sap-feeding insect called psyllid and the trees upon which these insects feed. All of these species are endemic to our area. The birds feed on a sugary substance produced by the psyllids, and their aggressive territorial behavior drives away other small native birds that would otherwise control the psyllids.

The over-abundance of psyllids drains the trees of nutrients, thins the foliage and ultimately kills areas of the forest. It has also been suggested that the bell birds actually 'farm' the psyllids by moving them from tree to tree.

Loss of tree species and habitat, particularly of large hollow-bearing and parent trees, is a major concern.

It is believed that a combination of insufficient controlled burning, thickening or invasion of the understorey by weeds (particularly Lantana) and over-enrichment of soils create ideal habitat for both the psyllid insects and bell birds. Once a 'tipping point' has been passed, the cycle accelerates itself as more bell birds join the colony.

It is possible that the over-abundance of bell birds and psyllids is actually secondary to the dieback, with the above causes (or even others) being the primary triggers that start the process. Until the process is better understood, the best that can be done is for us to maintain a healthy understorey while reducing disturbance and weed invasion.

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Controlled burning within the National Parks also helps to reduce Lantana etc and maintain soil fertility at correct levels. Many native plants only grow after fire or cannot tolerate elevated soil fertility. Areas that are burnt every 3 to 7 years, with good soil moisture and a backing fire, have not shown any symptoms of the Bell Miner Associated Dieback.

Alan Carter

## Native - Flowering now



*Hardenbergia violacea* Native Sarsparilla

A plant with violet pea flowers; often seen twining around tree trunks or scrambling over the floor of open forests.

## Gardening in the Mountains

### Myrtle Rust

You are probably all aware by now that Myrtle rust has appeared on our mountains with the last flush of new growth before Winter. As it likes warm, moist conditions, we may see renewed evidence soon.

### What To Look For

'Infected plants typically show small purple flecks and leaf spots on young leaves. These later develop into distinctive bright yellow pustules, mostly on the lower leaf surface.'

### What To Do

Care must be taken as it spreads easily by spores being carried by wind, equipment and machinery,

animals and insects, hands and clothing of humans. Do not move or destroy plants. Inform Biosecurity Queensland of any sightings. Phone 13 25 23

'The myrtle rust National Management Group agreed that it was not feasible to eradicate this disease from Australia. As a result, a national management program is being developed.'

## What Plants Will Be Affected

This disease affects plants of the *Myrtaceae* family, which includes the following plants that you may have in your garden.

<i>Eucalypts,</i>	Gums
<i>Melaleuca/Callistemon</i>	Paperbark/Bottlebrush
<i>Leptospermum,</i>	Tea Tree
<i>Syzygium,</i>	Lillypilly
<i>Acmena,</i>	Red Apple
<i>Austromyrtus/Gossia,</i>	'Blushing Beauty'
<i>Lophostemon,</i>	Brush Box
<i>Backhousia,</i>	Myrtle
<i>Rhodamnia,</i>	Mallet Wood
<i>Tristaniopsis,</i>	Water Gum
<i>Waterhousia,</i>	Weeping Lilly Pilly
<i>Xanthostemon,</i>	Golden Penda

'Wildlife Queensland has grave concerns for our native bush land should the disease get a hold. It may pose yet another threat to the koala and other fauna that depend on *Myrtaceous* plants for existence.'

The quoted information has been gleaned from various websites by entering 'Myrtle Rust' in Google. More information is available at:

<http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au>

Wendy Lees

## Do your block!

### Free bush care service

Would you like some assistance managing bushland on your block? Advice on weeds or advice on planting local native plants in your garden?

MEPA has a free service offering advice and information (supported by MBRC)

Contact Maggie - 3289 8175 or

Dominic - 3289 0093 or

Email: [askmepa@yahoo.com.au](mailto:askmepa@yahoo.com.au)