

In My Garden

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Currowan creeps back to life:

The fires of 5th December and 4th January burnt almost all of our forested property, leaving only a tiny patch of bushland on our creek untouched. Due to clearing up of burnt vegetation, plus high winds and falling trees, we have not explored more than a few hundred metres into our forest. But close to home there has been recovery underway.

Macrozamia communis (Burrawangs) and *Livistona australis* (Cabbage Palms) were the first to recover, after rain followed the fires.

After the February flood (400 mm of rain) some shrubs went into a delayed or second spring flowering. *Prostanthera lasianthos* put on a confused flowering. Many shrubs of *Persoonia linearis* had been burned, but these are resprouting from the trunks. One tough specimen on the edge of the fire front had been burned up its trunk, but the canopy only wilted. It is now covered in golden flowers.

Leucopogon lanceolatus along our rocky driveway burned; only its thick plastic label survived. In clearing the ground it was accidentally chopped down, but it is resprouting from the roots.

Hibbertia aspera seedlings,(or suckers) are appearing along the rocky driveway, where no *Hibbertia* was seen before. Suckers of *Podolobium ilicifolium* a bright pea flower with holly-like leaves are popping up, in the same area where their parent plants used to flower. *Dianella caerulea* have appeared in great numbers from burned rootstock. Orchid-like plants are appearing, and are being watched so we can identify them.

Down in the creek bed a great variety of vines are curling upwards over burned trees, and a variety of ferns are now covering the ground, including *Blechnum cartilagineum*, **Gristle Fern**, and the **Black-stemmed maidenhair**, *Adiantum formosum*.

We decided to remove or control the previously rampant *Cissus hypoglauca* vines, so that a greater variety of small plants and vines might have the space. Small herbs, vines and trees, many still to be identified, are appearing all over the creek banks.

A very hardy fern which regenerates quickly after fire, *Blechnum cartilagineum* is at its most prolific in the first couple of years after fire, when the extra light and moisture favour its growth.



Burned but not bowed, *Persoonia linearis*



Some we have managed to recognise include, *Smilax glyciophylla*, Sarsaparilla, *Pratia purpurascens*, White Root, *Pseuderanthemum variable*, Pastel Flower, and possibly *Androcalva fraseri*, previously known as *Comersonia fraseri*, Brush Kurrajong.

We are watching the burnt *Hedycarya angustifolia* (Native Mulberry) and *Baloghia inophyllum* (Brush Bloodwood) trees for signs of life. Some *Ficus coronata* (Sandpaper Figs) and *Breynia oblongifolia* (Coffee Bush) have appeared as seedlings. A parent *Ficus* tree survived scorching and has put on new leaves at its base. A *Synoum glandulosum* (Scentless Rosewood) was badly scorched but is slowly recovering. *Callicoma serratifolia* (Black Wattle, although it is not a wattle at all) burned but is resprouting from the roots. *Trema tomentosa var. aspera* (Poison Peach) trees burned but quickly resprouted leaves, and many seedlings are coming up. Not so resilient were most of the *Claoxylon australe* (Brittlewood) trees in the creek bed. Now we only have the single garden tree remaining, and one possible tree in the creek.

Amongst our massive old blue gums (*Eucalyptus saligna*) one did not burn, but it is slowly dying with only one branch still in leaf, much to our regret. New trees coming up include many *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* (Blueberry Ash), both seedlings and suckers.



Probably always around, but seeking private nooks, *Adiantum formosum* is a new addition to our plant list for this site.



Common throughout the region, *Pseuderanthemum variable* on the left, and *Pratia purpurascens* on the right, seem happy to grow anywhere and everywhere. Those who have well structured and mulched soil will soon recognise the *Pratia* as an enemy, one that invades, hides under shrubs, in the vegie patch, and defies eradication. In its natural habitat, it is a welcome cheery flower dotting the understorey.

We think that of all the local forest shrubs, *Persoonia linearis*, **(Narrow-leaved Geebung)** is definitely the most fire-tolerant, both in resisting burning and in quickly regenerating afterwards. Seedlings of this continue to pop up in odd places in our garden, and some have been potted for giving away.

We have some plants for the donation bench when we meet again, including *Pandorea pandorana*, *Persoonia linearis*, *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* seedlings (flower colour unknown) *Grevillea rhyolitica* seedlings, and *Ficus coronata*

A once venerable *Eucalyptus saligna*, sadly now dead following twice being burned. No doubt many of the next generation will fight to take over the space

