

McLaren Vale Wine Region

Case Study, June 2021

Tintookie Vineyards, Blewitt Springs, SA

EcoGrower: Lulu Lunn

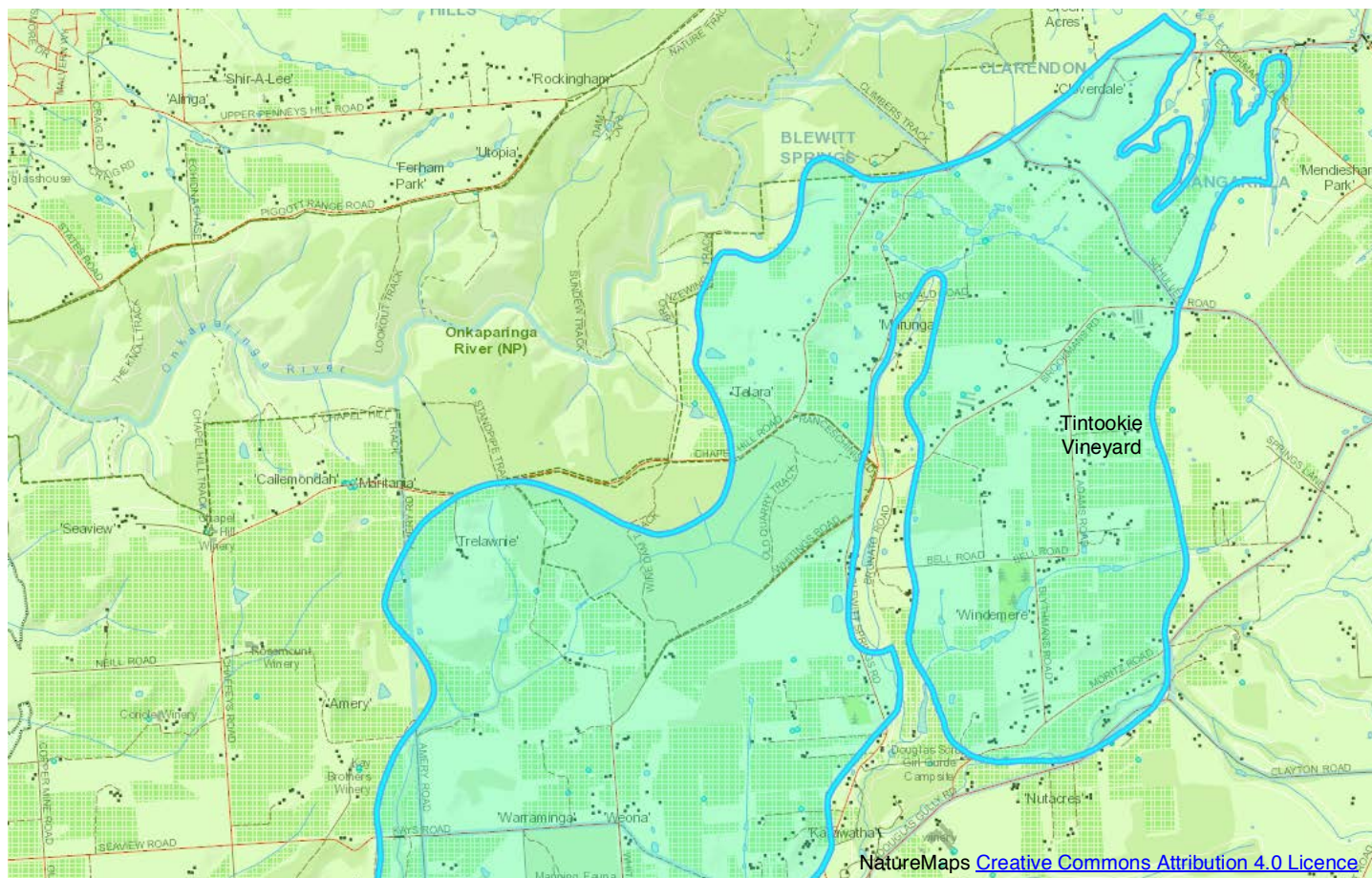
"I have learned so much more about the ecology and interactions of plants, insects and even soil and its microbiome since beginning with EcoVineyards."

It has encouraged me to read, learn and research more and be more inquisitive. After 35 years of being in the same job it has reintroduced enthusiasm back into it and I am excited about the future."



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Plant community (marked in blue): Pink gum, *Eucalyptus fasciculosa* woodland over grassy and herbaceous understorey





Case study

What worked well?

- I feel that it has definitely been a totally worthwhile experience and experiment. It has really made me think differently about the vineyard and about the natural world I am lucky enough to live in.
- I have started to think about how I can work with the nature around me to benefit my vineyard instead of trying to control it or eradicate it. It has convinced me to continue to work towards becoming totally organic.
- I am so much more aware of the insects, birds and native species of plants around me than when I started on this adventure and I definitely want to continue growing, planting and experimenting with different native species of plants.
- I feel it has been a life changing experience and I look forward to watching how it all develops and what else I can do differently.

Progress (June 2019 to 2021):

In my EcoVineyards project, I undertook to plant different groundcovers and prostrate natives in between my vines (in the undervine area) to act as habitat for beneficial insects to overwinter in.

I also considered planting similar natives in my midrow and slashing a bit higher than I normally would, but I put this off after the big fires we had in the hills. I will relook at this but will choose my plants carefully, so they don't act as a wick.

I have been slashing a bit higher anyway to make sure I always have some habitat for insects.

I have also grown a number of insectary seedlings to plant out under the large eucalypts that surround my property and many of my vineyard blocks, in order to create understorey which is more hospitable to insects.

I have planted 6 rows with about 15 species (so far) in an open area near one of my blocks and plan to plant more native species in the future. I have planted about 750 native flowering plants and grasses to date.

I have been using less chemical, although I generally only do 1 undervine herbicide over 60% of my property.

I have also been heavily suppressing the weeds in a couple of wide rows in my vineyard since the project started so that I can have native grass species planted with the hope of continuing this if they do well.

The bulk of this work was done in the first and second year, once we had rain. I am still growing seedlings which I am about to plant out under the trees now we have had some rain and I have just purchased about 600 seeds of 15 different native species which I intend to plant in tubes in spring to grow up and plant next autumn.

So far most of the plants I have transplanted have done quite well and I have been very happy with the way the plants have grown and hope to continue on this path.



Photo above: Lulu has planted a diversity of native shrubs in between vineyards (Photo: Mary Retallack).

Photo left: Lulu is trialling a range of native ground cover plants including *Kennedia prostrata*, running postman (pictured), *Atriplex semibaccata*, creeping saltbush and *Myoporum parvifolium*, creeping boobialla 'fine leaf form' (Photo: Mary Retallack).



Atriplex semibaccata, creeping saltbush growing in the undervine area (Photo: Mary Retallack)



Chloris truncata, windmill grass growing in the undervine area (Photo: Mary Retallack)



Myoporum parvifolium, creeping boobialla 'fine leaf form' growing in the undervine area (Photo: Mary Retallack)



Myoporum parvifolium, creeping boobialla 'purple leaf form' growing in the undervine area (Photo: Mary Retallack)

Insights

Pitfalls to avoid

- The biggest problem I had was making sure the tube stock had enough water to get established. This entailed running lots of drip line and checking drippers.
- Weeds are a constant problem as I can't spray conventional herbicide (and don't really want to) but I also can't disc or knife which means that I have to hand weed. This is very labour intensive, but I am prepared to keep the experiment going and try and work out easier solutions as the native plants get stronger and hopefully take over from the weeds.
- One big mistake I made was not labelling every plant. It sounds labour intensive, but I put marker sticks by each plant, so I could find them and numbering or initialling them would have been easy to do. So, without this - when one died, I didn't know what it was!
- I had about 10% plants that didn't make it and I don't know if they were the same plant i.e., I don't plant them again or whether it was just weak plants.
- I really wish I had kept records of what species I planted where. It would have saved a lot of time in the long run, and I could have learned from my mistakes rather than having to make them again.



Native plant list:

- *Acacia pycnantha*, golden wattle
- *Atriplex semibaccata*, creeping saltbush
- *Austrostipa elegantissima*, elegant speargrass
- *Austrostipa* ssp. mixed species, spear grass
- *Banksia menziesii*, firewood banksia
- *Banksia ornata*, desert banksia
- *Bursaria spinosa*, Christmas bush or sweet bursaria
- *Chloris truncata*, windmill grass
- *Clematis microphylla*, old man's beard
- *Enchylaena tomentosa*, ruby saltbush
- *Hardenbergia violacea*, native lilac
- *Kennedia prostrata*, running postman
- *Leptospermum continentale*, prickly tea-tree
- *Melaleuca lanceolata*, dryland tea-tree
- *Myoporum parvifolium*, creeping boobialla
- *Rytidosperma* mixed species, wallaby grasses

Expenses (cash and in-kind):

I spent my grant allocation on Trees for Life and growing my own plants. Buying plenty of tube stock to get growing faster in the first season. Buying lots of grow guards, pickets and weed mats. Buying seed for growing my own plants. Paying to have native grasses sown.

Labour has probably been the biggest cost. Planting and weeding and laying dripline and the cost of it and the drippers. Filling tubes for planting and watering seedlings. Herbiciding my rows I want to plant my native grasses in as I've had to do it reasonably regularly.

At a guess I would say the time it has taken in hours would be 74+ but that would be on the conservative side.

Many thanks to Dr Mary Retallack and her team for the opportunity to be a part of this very worthwhile project to improve on what we have been doing and learn so much along the way.



Photo above: Plants were selected from the pink gum native plant community list (Photo: Mary Retallack).

Photo left: Lulu has been propagating her own native plant seed so they can be planted out as tube stock (Photo: Mary Retallack).

Expenses (cash and in-kind)

Name: Tintookie Vineyards		Region: McLaren Vale			
Date	Activity	Number of plants	Grant cash expenses	Additional cash co-contribution	In-kind time captured
	Herbicide			\$ 50.00	6 hrs
10/08/2019	Tube stock	30	\$ 58.50		
11/08/2019	TFL membership + trees	360	\$ 275.00	\$ 300.00	30 hrs
11/08/2020	TFL Member + trees	360	\$ 365.00		30 hrs
11/08/2020	Guards, weed mat etc		\$1,453.00		5 hrs
	Dripline, drippers			\$ 100.00	3 hrs
	Native grasses sown		\$1,848.50		
	Native seeds			\$ 160.00	
TOTAL		750	\$4,000.00	\$ 610.00	74 hrs

Thank you to our project partners!



This project is supported by the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board's Grassroots Grants Program and is funded by the landscape levy.

Acknowledgement of country

The EcoVineyards project acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country.

The Kaurna people are the traditional custodians of the McLaren vale region and have an ongoing connection to the land.

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For more info about the EcoVineyards project see <https://www.wgcsa.com.au/ecovineyards.html>