

Paddock Trees

FACT SHEET 2: *Steps to successful restoration*

Paddock Trees

are the remnants of once extensive woodlands and are often the oldest living things in the landscape. Across our rural landscape, paddock trees stand out as an iconic image, providing shade and shelter for livestock and maintaining the productive capacity of the land. Paddock trees also provide an immense benefit to biodiversity by providing food, shelter and nesting sites for a large number of birds, bats, insects and small mammals.

Landholders can make huge difference towards the sustainability of their farm and to the broader landscape by protecting and encouraging paddock trees.

Protecting Existing Paddock Trees

is the most cost effective means of retaining paddock trees in the landscape. Researchers believe that protecting paddock trees can extend their survival by up to 100 years.

There are a number of considerations when protecting paddock trees:

Fencing—livestock damage paddock trees by ringbarking, rubbing and chewing off new growth. Fencing around selected trees can not only prevent stock damage but also encourage natural regeneration. Fencing needs to be stock proof and should be at least as wide as the canopy drip line of the tree.

Revegetation—where possible additional trees, shrubs and understorey plants should be planted around the existing tree to enhance the trees habitat values whilst improving its health. Plantings around paddock trees can provide a buffer of new growth to protect it against wind issues and shield them from sprays and fertilisers – and other detrimental agricultural impacts. The plantings will also encourage more birds to control insects which predate on the tree.

Dead trees—where possible include and retain dead trees in designing your site. When paddock trees die they still have excellent values providing habitat for wildlife especially in providing hollows.

Pest Control—it is important to control herbivores such as rabbits and hares from ringbarking trees and damaging any natural regeneration.

Avoid fertiliser applications, herbicide spray drift and cultivation near the drip line of existing paddock trees to prevent changes to soil health.

Leave fallen branches and other ground debris to decompose naturally. 'Messiness' on the ground greatly raises the value of an area for wildlife. This cover is vital habitat for many reptiles, small mammals, and some birds. More than half of the birds classified as declining woodland species are dependent on the condition of the ground layer where they forage amongst leaf litter and grasses for invertebrates and other food.

It is however important not to stack fallen timber up against the tree as this increases the risk of death during wildfires.

Avoid burning near paddock trees as these trees are often hollow and can be damaged or killed.



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Planting New Paddock Trees

Establishing paddock trees on your farm can not only provide future shade and shelter for stock but also to help provide future habitat for wildlife.

For these trees to provide multiple benefits and survive grazing practices there are a number of things to consider:

1. **Placement**—Open spaces in the landscape presents a major barrier for the movement of wildlife. Paddock trees provide stepping stones between these open areas.

To enable a wide range of birds and mammals to use new trees as a stepping stone, paddock trees should be planted no more than 50m apart.

2. **Fencing**—fencing around individual new trees needs to be sturdy to handle cattle rubbing on them and pushing on them causing them to collapse. Individuals tree guards to be constructed from sturdy materials to protect the tree for at least the first 5 years of its life.

Construction needs to consider preventing stock from lifting the guard to graze grass at the base as well as being high enough to prevent grazing of leaves as the tree grows.

3. **Site preparation**—grass should be removed from the planting area, by either spraying or physical removal to prevent competition for soil moisture.

Before planting holes should be dug as deep as possible to encourage new plants to develop their root system.

4. **Planting**—select a variety of locally native fast growing species such as River Red Gum, Blakelys Red Gum, Apple Box, and Yellow Box. Where possible advanced tubestock can be ordered from nurseries to accelerate growing time.

5. **Prevent herbivore damage**—use plastic or cardboard tree guards around new trees to prevent damage from rabbits and hares.

6. **Timing**—new paddock trees should be established in late autumn through to early spring to enable new plants to become established before the heat of summer.



Funding is available to landholders to protect and reinstate paddock trees in our landscape. The project is a partnership between the Riverina Highlands Landcare Network, the Riverina Local Land Services, NSW Environmental Trust and the Australian National University.

If you would like more information on this project please contact:

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