

In My Garden

Lesley Vincent and Geoff Lovie

It is now just over 3 months since the fire tore through our neighbourhood on 31 December, 2019. We are some of the fortunate ones. Despite the adjacent forest being burnt and much of our garden, our home was virtually untouched.



Our property is adjacent to the Mogo State Forest on The Ridge Road in Surf Beach. Several RFS vehicles arrived just before 6am on New Year's Eve and urged us to leave immediately.

I was ready to go as per our plan and Geoff was going to stay and defend. However, having never experienced a bushfire before, and on the urgent advice of the RFS, he decided to evacuate as well.

We had prepared the property as best we could and our house was built according to the current bushfire construction code (with some additional features for fire resistance), but having never experienced anything like this, we did not know what to expect.



After the fire front had passed, Geoff managed to get back to our property on his motorcycle and found the house still standing.

The forest and our rainforest gully were devastated and most of the garden burnt. He spent the next few hours hosing down trees and putting out spot fires and mulch fires.



The next day I came home although it would be a week before we could get our cars up the road and 6 weeks before we would have power back on.



The property looks vastly different now after only 3 months.



We walk in the forest almost everyday and so I have been taking photos on a regular basis of the forest regeneration and also of our garden. The welcome rains in mid to late January brought on the new growth. The first plants to start

shooting were the grasses and the *Macrozamia communis* (Burrawang) including many new *Macrozamia* seedlings, followed by the epicormic growth on the Eucalypts and the emergence of hundreds of young **Eucalypt** and **Acacia** seedlings.

Rolling green hills, Feb 18th 2020. Note the bird bath, shown on the previous page, now in use.

In our garden I was amazed at the speed with which the **Chrysocephalum**'s and **Indigofera** started to regrow and a **Hardenbergia violacea** cultivar that not only started to regrow from the stump, but also sprouted a multitude of seedlings from previously fallen seeds.

The majority of our *Grevillea* species are gone, however, a few cultivars have survived including a **G. 'Coconut Ice'** that has sprouted from the root stump and is flourishing.

I was advised to 'wait and see' what comes back after the bushfire and this was sage advice as I am seeing new growth emerging from the roots of some trees that I thought were lost including the *Hymenosporum flavum*, *Tristaniopsis collina*, an *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* and an *Acacia cognata*.



Other plants showing signs of recovery are a *Hakea macraeana*, *Anigozanthos* spp, *Callistemon* spp, *Scaevola aemula*, *Ammobium elatum* (new seedlings) and one *Westringia* 'Jervis Gem' which I discovered resprouting from the base just as I was about to dig it out.

Great bushfire survivors are also the *Xanthorrhoea*, *Lomandra* spp, *Myoporum parvifolium* and *Carpobrotus glaucescens*.

Some of the natives that have not recovered to date include several *Banksias*, *Grevilleas* and *Acacias*, *Ceratopetalum gummiferum*, *Philotheca*, *Correas*, *Rulingia*, *Eremophila*, *Leptospermum* and many *Westringia*.

Also I have seen no sign of recovery on the stands of *Polyscias murrayi* in our gully but I am hoping that some of the seeds may sprout new growth in the future.



Hard at work, re-establishing the eastern gardens

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Whilst it is early days, expect that *Ceratopetalum gummiferum* should spring to life, as it copes well with fire in its natural habitat. One could also expect that *Leptospermums* should also respond, particularly as the fire was hot, but passed through the area quickly. *Philotheca* spp, might also generally recover if the plants were well established, so we will have to wait and see what the future brings.