

Project Snapshot

Land Manager's Name/s:	Ronald and Maria Smith
Property Size:	400 ha
Location:	Doodlakine
Annual Rainfall:	300 mm
Enterprise mix	Cropping and sheep
Soil types/vegetation types:	Sandy loam over clay

Key Messages

- Taking the time to set the tree planter up correctly will greatly improve the survival rate of the seedlings.
- If you can see that the land is starting to degrade, don't wait. Do something straight away.
- Biodiverse plantings have numerous environmental benefits and are a valuable asset for your stock program.

A love of the land

As a young child Maria live in the Doodlakine area on the 'Nambling Brook' property, owned by an extended family member. Now married to Ronald Smith, who is originally from Merredin, they live and run a business in Perth. As their hearts are still in the area they jumped at the chance to purchase the property when the opportunity came up. Although Ron and Maria have leased 'Nambling Brook' to a neighbouring farmer, they try to come up as often as possible. On their visits they work on improving the property.

Revegetation – an ongoing process

Ron and Maria had seen the land gradually degrading over many years and as they have a great love and appreciation for the land they would like to see it restored, to protect the Salmon gums and other remnant vegetation that still persist. So when they were up on one of their frequent visits, they contacted their local Natural Resource Management Officer to discuss some options. Here it was suggested that they should apply for Wheatbelt NRM's Soil Conservation Incentive Program to revegetate a degraded area of the property. This was followed by a site visit with the Project Support Officer where an Action Plan (including a species list) was developed.

The project site is situated low in the landscape, and is separated from the salt lake system by a belt of Bluebush. The site was still being cropped to barley but the effects of wind erosion and the early signs of salinity were becoming evident. "It looked pretty sad and sorry" commented Ron. To protect the area from further degradation they decided to plant a multitude of perennial species. These included oil malle (*Eucalyptus loxophleba lissophloia*), Old Man saltbush (*Atriplex nummularia*), River saltbush (*Atriplex amnicola*), Swamp shea oak (*Casuarina obesa*) and Tan wattle (*Acacia hemiteles*).

The block planting was a great team effort, with friends, family and staff coming up from Perth to lend a hand. After a few small difficulties, a neighbouring farmer came to help out with setting up the tree planter.

Over one weekend the whole 30,000 seedlings were planted.

Lessons learnt

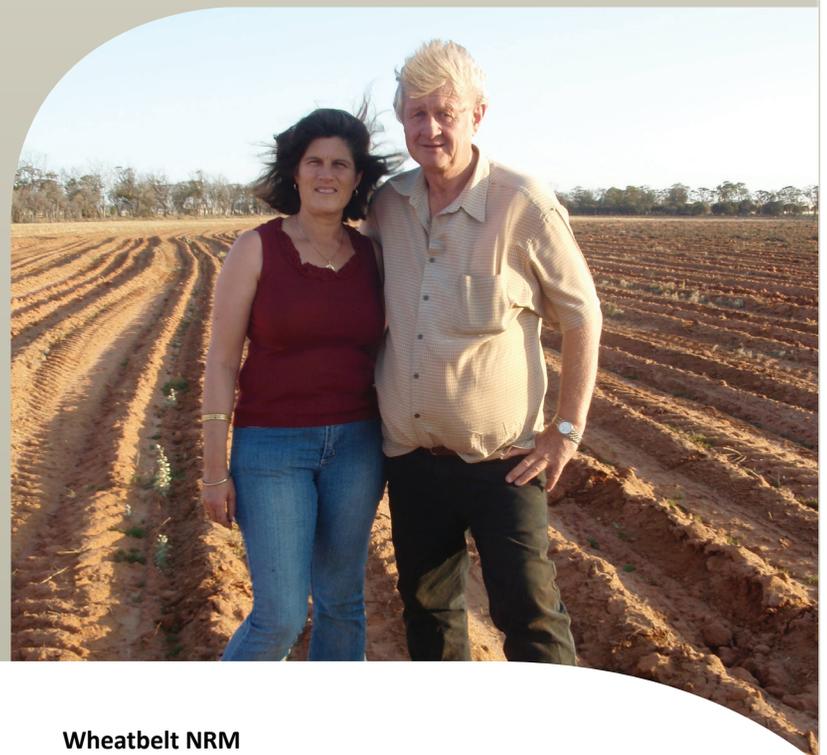
Despite the low rainfall after planting most of the seedlings have survived and are doing quite well. Ron and Maria have found these early results very reassuring and look forward to seeing the site develop. The planting runs down into the bluebush dominated areas that surround the salt lake have been quite successful. Ron plans to try to continue revegetating this semi-saline area.

Ron and Maria have been encouraged by the results of the project so far and are planning to extend the site with more seedlings next year to increase the area's biodiversity. The site will then be fenced off. The aim at the moment is to establish a mixture of species that will grow, and improve the soil quality and health of the environment. In the future they hope to extend biodiverse "tree" belts around the property, creating corridors for wildlife and protecting valuable agricultural land. In the long run they see this site as a valuable winter grazing area for sheep, which also provides valuable shelter all year round.

Acknowledgements

Ronald and Maria Smith

Tracey Hobbs



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