

# Trees have a role to play on farm



## Project Snapshot

<b>Land Manager Names:</b>	<b>Tony, Dave and Suanne Crossland Gavin and Michelle Hooper Bruce and Heather Talbot Kim and Jo Courboules</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Corrigin</b>
<b>Annual Rainfall (mm):</b>	<b>~300mm</b>
<b>Enterprise Mix:</b>	<b>mixed grain and sheep 100% cropping mixed grain and sheep 100% cropping</b>
<b>Soil Types/Vegetation Types:</b>	<b>Jam, York gum, salmon gum, morel and gimlet, duplex soils, sand over clay and sandplain</b>
<b>Local Community Group:</b>	<b>Corrigin Farm Improvement Group</b>

Above: Trees planted around salt lake to slow wind speed

## Key Messages

- Order tree seedlings early to ensure optimal delivery time.
- Plant tree belts strategically to block strong winds
- Although hand planting is more labour intensive, trees can have greater survival rates using this method, especially when conditions are less favourable.

## A collaborative effort

The Corrigin Farm Improvement Group is a group that invests in the local community and stands by the vision 'Farming for our future'. Since starting over 20 years ago they have purchased multiple pieces of equipment, like a ripper moulder, two tree planters and a weigh trailer, which they hire to local farmers.

Sandy Turton, a previous employee at the Corrigin Farm Improvement Group generated a lot of enthusiasm amongst the Corrigin farmers to undertake activities on farm. With her help four farming families (Crosslands, Hooper, Talbot and Courboules) accessed Wheatbelt NRM funding through the Soil Conservation Incentives Program to plant trees on degraded areas of their farms. These families all had a common goal, to establish belts and/or blocks of trees to reduce wind speed on agricultural land and bare salt lakes. "Trees will help with farm management while contributing towards environmental and economic sustainability", Gavin Hooper said. All of the trees were established using a Chatfield tree planter, apart from those at Talbots which were hand planted using a poti-putki.

**Below are the tree plantings each farming family undertook.**

### On-ground activities:

#### Crosslands:

2,500 oil mallees planted in four belts (600-800m long) beside defined drainage lines. Plus one block of 5,100 sandalwood (*Santalum spicatum*) hosts on a hill top.

#### Hooper:

5,000 oil mallees planted in two belts (1.4km long) along the north west to north east borders of a salt lake and in a block.

#### Talbot:

3,800 oil mallees planted in two belts (1.3km long) beside a minor creek line.

#### Courboules:

14,300 brushwood seedlings planted in a block on the north and east side of salt lake and 1,800 oil mallees planted in a belt (1.8km long) along the edge of a salt affected area.



## Driving reasons for change

For the Crosslands, planting oil mallees and sandalwood meant many benefits to the farm. These included forming wind breaks, utilising excess groundwater and the possibility of offering an alternative farm income from carbon credits and selling the oil. "The most important change for us however will be the look of the farm", Tony said. For the Hooper family who are continuous croppers, they decided to plant oil mallee mainly in belts to form strategic wind breaks, act as spray buffers (particularly between neighbours), to define boundaries and reduce recharge into the salt lakes. Gavin added, "If we ever get back into sheep the oil mallees will also provide valuable shelter". In the case of the Talbot's, they were very keen to plant oil mallees to address on farm salinity and provide shelter for stock. Part of the attraction to growing oil mallees compared to other tree species was that they wouldn't need to be fenced off. As Bruce mentioned, "The sheep can use the area once established because they don't find the oil mallee palatable". Kim Courboules explained his family's motivation to plant trees, saying, "We wanted to stop the spread of the blue bush out of the salt zone into the croppable areas and if legislation ever came through we hope to be rewarded with carbon credits". He continued, "I can see that in the future the trees will slow the



wind and stop the salt dust blowing off the salt lake onto the good cropping land". The family also had the added confidence of undertaking the project knowing that they had the support of the Corrigin Farm Improvement Group and Wheatbelt NRM.

## Lessons Learnt

For all the farmers' 2010 was a difficult season for establishing trees. If they could have looked into a crystal ball they would have waited for a more favourable year. "It was disappointing to see trees die from lack of rain" Tony mentioned. Gavin also pointed out the need to order seedlings in advance saying, "If we had received the trees earlier we could have taken advantage of the winter rain we did have. In hindsight spraying out weeds would have helped establishment too". Although low survival rates were disheartening, fortunately due to the funding set up, all of the families were provided with more seedlings for infilling in 2011. Unlike the other farmers however, Bruce and Heather Talbot had surprisingly good survival rates (70-80%) in 2010 given it was a drought year. "I think using the hand planter rather than the machine planter contributed to our seedling survival". Bruce said. As Kim mentioned however, "Using potti putkis makes harder work of the revegetation program". Surprisingly though the Talbot's found

that a mob of hoggets actually gave the oil mallees a bit of a hammering. Now that the trees have established they don't think this is an issue. For the Courboules it was mainly the brushwood that did not establish in a variety of locations and soil types. Establishment wasn't helped either with kangaroos nibbling on the seedlings. "The oil mallees were tougher and established better", Kim said. Although during the planting program there were some ups and down, all of the farmers were happy they took part. "I have learnt about the importance of putting trees back into the landscape", Tony explained. "They are easy to manage and should improve the value of the farm". Gavin reiterated the importance of this added aesthetic value to his farm.

## Building a Legacy

Running a sustainable enterprise is something that is very important to these Corrigin farmers. They would like to see more funds made available on a continual basis through government bodies. Everything they do is about taking care of their land so they and the next generation can continue farming into the future. "Trees will always be a part of our farming system," commented Tony. Kim had a similar sentiment saying, "We want to continue what we started by planting trees on non-productive land. At the moment it's only good for growing weeds".





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