

Farming Secrets Digest

Special points of interest:

- The Problem with Heliotrope
- Why Grow Natives Grasses?
- How To Farm With Native Grasses

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Welcome to our 4th **Farming Secrets Digest!** We've been busy once again particularly when Hugh Lovel came down to present his 2 day lecture series. Many farmers have read Hugh's book "A Biodynamic Farmer" and were keen to hear more. Our minds were expanded further as Hugh shared his perception of energy and patterns in nature. (More on Page 3) "**Weed of a month**" this issue is the common Heliotrope, a common invasive plant especially in summer on grazing lands when the ground is bare

and devoid of pasture. The weed is very dangerous to stock and the common treatment is to poison it. However the damage done to the soil microbiology must be considered when choosing this option. Advice from Colin Seis is to allow the native pastures to reestablish therefore providing ground cover and eventually minimising its reappearance. In the interim restrict grazing. **Hot Topic** as found at: www.farmingsecrets.com/members/forum. This

month we discuss: **How to Farm With Native Grasses**

What is Farming Secrets?

Farming Secrets is a Membership Club which brings the network of knowledge, experts and farmers to your door via DVDs, CDs, conference calls, newsletters and the internet. We work with experts to help YOU to gain better yields, to lower costs and to increase profits. For more information go to : www.farmingsecrets.com

Why Grow Native Grasses? Submitted By Graeme Hand



Stipa* Native Grasses Association promotes and proves the profitable management of native grasses by motivated people in healthy landscapes.

Firstly Why Aren't Native Grasses and Regenerative Agriculture More Broadly Accepted?

Many of the claims that Stipa makes about the value of native grasses are based on a combination of practices which produces a different outcome than other combinations. E.g. With planned grazing management many species are required for stability, resilience and profit where as with continuous grazing a few grasses produce the greatest output. Overall Stipa's experience is that unless you combine practices that promote diversity, production of litter and then the biological decay of this litter then the claims made by Stipa do not occur. *Graeme Hand*

A Point of View on Stipa from a Member

The description of Stipa reads, "Stipa continues to promote to all land managers the use of native grasses to achieve profit from a healthy landscape." This links financial health with ecological health and highlights

the role of native grasses in achieving that goal. **I think we are all interested in producing healthy resilient landscapes** which by definition are ones of diversity, relatively low input requirements, productive in any season and able to reproduce and develop. These are the qualities, in my opinion, where our native species have such a strong role to play. I personally have no qualms about non native species being part of the mix if they are able to survive and reproduce and allow diversity to develop. We are finding that the improved non-native varieties are not as well adapted to the highly variable nature of our seasons and on their own produce a simple and unstable grassland which is not resilient. **With the potential impact of climate change increasing variability and the inexorable rise of the costs of fertilisers and oil based inputs native species are going to increase in their importance in attempting to achieve resilient and productive landscapes.** I feel if we focus on the need to create resilient and productive landscapes then the role of native species (requiring few outside supports) becomes much easier to understand.

I look forward to being part of the developing understanding of our landscape and the role of agriculture within it. *Sam Johnson*

Stipa* is the name of a native grass

Trekking around with Hugo and Helen

Farming Secrets send our thoughts and prayers to ALL people affected by the recent tragic bushfires. We are aware that many of you have faced horrific events and suffered much loss and are now facing the future with difficulty. Many have helped and the generosity of people in these times is a wonderful reminder of the goodness of people. We are thankful for every contributor.



Malcolm, Hugh, Colin and Peter discuss native pasture regeneration.

Travel up North

We were still under warnings early this month and delayed plans to meet up with **Hugh Lovel** and **Colin Seis** at the Hammon's where we held a round table discussion about Hugh's passions for farming with respect to energy and biodynamics. This was followed by a field walk with Colin to discover the natives grasses growing on the Hammon's property as heliotrope was the dominant plant in one of his grazing paddocks. What to do? Neighbour Malcolm McPherson joined in when Colin was dowsing for water and many ideas were exchanged as we examined the roadsides and discovered an estimated 30 species naturally occurring.



Malcolm, Hugh, Peter and Colin examine roadside native grasses.

After dinner Colin presented an abbreviated talk about Pasture Cropping—all in all a most stimulating day!

Hugh followed us back to The Patch very late into the night risking running out of petrol—both cars—as all stations were closed. However we were saved within metres of running out—the power of intention!

Hugh Lovel's 2 day lecture series at Darnum

Due to extreme fire danger, the lectures were postponed for a day. Was it due to Hugh that rain miraculously appeared on the day of warning? Anyway it was most WELCOME and a strange sight to see and certainly quelling further fears of more bushfires. About 40 people gathered to hear Hugh deliver his thought provoking presentations. These will be detailed in our next FS Digest.

Guess who came to stay?



Tom Nicholas, Alan Woods, Hugo, Doug Ross and **Justin Schultz** gather around Hugh to listen to his analysis of Alan's soil test and to examine his soil samples. Yes, and all stayed for a night or two and many lively discussions were held. We all felt privileged to share more time with Hugh.



Hugh and **Robert Knox** meet our local bee keeper and honey man, Peter

at our local market at Kallista

What Others Say

"This site (<http://farmingsecrets.com/blog>) has so much informative information on it, and it is so easy to follow. Thanks for all of the time and effort that you put into this Hugo, and Helen"

Ryan S. Idaho, USA

"Its been a while i know, time seems to be flying by quicker than ever. I wanted to thank you for sending me these wonderful and informative lectures, etc. I'm learning a great deal and passing it on to my neighbors. Jerry Brunetti and Pat Coleby are my favorites thus far, though i'm abt to watch Elaine Ing-ham and have a feeling i'll love her too. Thank you VERY much :)"

Mindy Eckhardt, Colorado, USA

"I won't be coming to Hugh's talk. Thanks for the invite and it was great to see you guys. Keep up the wonderful work. I have read Hugh's book, .. Thought provoking. Especially for someone from my background. I have started watching the DVD. Anyway have a great time and batten down the hatches! "

Steve Skopilianos, Keilor, Vic, AU

*"I have enjoyed every article ever written for acres Australia that **Hugh** wrote. I will not be able to get to the talks but would look forward to them on DVD or CD."*

Martin J. Williams, Katherine, NT

"The welcome kit arrived on Mar 5th and the Weeds dvd today.

Thanks, I can't wait to dig in.

2. Payment plan

Also, if our accounting office can't do the monthly subscription, can we do a one time 12 month payment?"

Dave Horn, Washington, USA

"Good work on your blog, I love to see the effort and I am just saying keep up the good work."

Hellen CLARK

"We enjoy your company, greatly value your knowledge, expertise and on going support and feel privileged to be privy to your contacts."

Peter & Jennie Hammon, Wilby

