

**Trees For Life bushcarers and the Burnside City Council are working side by side to retain and restore the last intact relic of a large Adelaide Plains Grey Box woodland – a sanctuary now known as Heatherbank Reserve, in the Adelaide suburb of Stonyfell.**

The small reserve, only 0.3ha in area, contains 68 indigenous plant species identified so far (including orchids, sundews, ferns and other plant groups) – diversity that is rare for the metropolitan area where so much native vegetation has been cleared.

It is part of a larger area of woodland that has been subdivided for housing.

The approved plan for the subdivision placed some of the most diverse vegetation in the reserve, but a considerable amount was included in adjoining allotments.

After five years of lobbying by conservation groups, including Trees for Life and local residents, Council was able to negotiate the sale of some additional land to enlarge the proposed nature reserve.

One of the supporters of the reserve was Sue Potter, local resident and member of Trees For Life since 1990.

Sue wrote a letter to the Eastern Courier newspaper, urging the Burnside City Council to buy the additional land on Heatherbank Terrace, stressing how important the vegetation was.

Their efforts weren't in vain, with Burnside Council eventually deciding to buy additional land for the nature reserve – thereby helping save one of Adelaide's best patches of small ground-flora species.

Sue and fellow bushcarer Dianne Fairhead now work alongside the Burnside Council in maintaining Heatherbank Reserve, a site they have been meeting on "every other Tuesday" since last November.

The one third of a hectare site is continually full of surprises, according to the pair, as weeds are removed and native flora allowed to come through.

"Take that twining lily,' Sue points out, 'we are finding little plants that have been sitting here dormant for God knows how long, all of a sudden one of our stakes are placed in front of it, and they grab onto it and start climbing up it – it's amazing!"

As well as clearing away weeds such as Soursobs, Bridal creeper, Sparaxis, Watsonias and Veldt grass, feral olive trees have also been poisoned using the drill and fill method, and are on the way out.

"A lot of the weedy canopy has already been removed ... it really was just a jungle," Dianne says.

"As the smaller plants are getting more sunlight, the difference has been quite remarkable."

Heatherbank Reserve is Sue's third bush site (she also helps look after one for Bush For Life in Mount Osmond, and one in Beaumont Common for the Burnside Council), while it is number two for Dianne.

Both agree it is very satisfying work, especially when people notice they are making a difference and species re-emerge.

"To help maintain our native bushland for future generations I think is quite a privilege," Dianne says.

Dianne and Sue, as well as Bush For Life officers, sing the praises of the Burnside City Council, describing it as one of the State's most progressive councils in terms of bushland conservation.

Over the years the Council has recognised the Bush For Life program as being valuable and funds nine bush sites in its district.

The Council's Group Leader, Conservation and Land Management, Andrew Crompton, said restoring the vegetation on Heatherbank Reserve was a long-term process involving close collaboration between BFL volunteers, Council staff and bushcare contractors.

"It is anticipated Heatherbank Reserve will be open to the public in autumn next year when primary weed clearance will be completed and signs, paths and seats are in place.

Path alignments have been chosen to minimise impact on flora and all indigenous flora along the paths are being lifted and kept in the nursery to be returned to other areas in the reserve when weeds have been eliminated," Andrew said.

He said apart from Heatherbank Reserve, several other native vegetation sites in Burnside were "very degraded".

"... but, with the assistance of Bush For Life volunteers, this is gradually turning around.

"There are eight other Bush For Life sites in Burnside Council area - all in the hills face reserves," he said.

"There are many other sites in the plains areas of the City where native vegetation is either being conserved, restored or reinstated. The best known of these are Beaumont Common and Linden Gardens."

Details of these and other sites can be found on the City of Burnside's website:

<http://www.burnside.sa.gov.au>