

## Friends of Porteous Park By Mike Norman

**After a series of five fires lit by vandals in as many years, and subsequent weed invasion, the bushland of Porteous Park was going to ruin. Following a letter drop to surrounding streets, an unincorporated friends group was formed in 2002 to restore the bushland. A decade later, most of the same volunteers are still involved.**

Porteous Park in Sorrento is a sizable remnant of banksia woodland of vegetation type Cottesloe Complex – Central and South containing more than 100 species of flowering plant.

Initially, the Friends identified and targeted three aggressive weeds; perennial veldt grass (*Ehrharta calycina*), Geraldton carnation weed (*Euphorbia terracina*) and *Pelargonium capitatum*. The concept of zero tolerance weeding was adopted, that is, removal of those weed species over the entire park before seed shed. Manual removal methods were used by the Friends (herbicide use is not permitted) and the City of Joondalup sprayed the grasses using grass-selective herbicides. Of these, veldt grass is still somewhat of a problem due to incomplete coverage of the spraying in some years. The Friends now manually remove any missed veldt grass a month or two after spraying.

The number of weed species removed has increased to 22. Much of the work is done in July and August prior to seed set to avoid the need to bag the weeds, thereby increasing weeding efficiency. Bulbous weed species are bagged. Special tools have been designed and manufactured to assist with the efficient manual removal of weed species, especially those with bulbs. Given that the ground is quite hard and stony in places, the weeds cannot be quickly removed using a standard hand trowel.

Community weeding and planting events are held at least once a month during winter and spring. Our work is augmented by the use of grant-funded specialist contractors under Friends Group Coordinator supervision. In 2012, another Environmental Community Grant of \$3,850 and a Special Purpose Grant of \$2,000



Not all hard work – Mike (left) and some members of the Friends of Porteous Park enjoying morning tea. Photo – Mike Norman

has been received from DEC and the City of Joondalup respectively. These grants are currently being used to target the complete removal of Cape tulip (*Moraea flaccida*) and *Gladiolus caryophyllaceus*. Relatively small grants such as these have been very effective in achieving bushland restoration objectives.

Planting of local provenance seedlings supplied by the City of Joondalup has been used to infill degraded areas. However, the focus on zero tolerance weeding has seen a large amount of natural regeneration occur to the point that most of the bushland is now in good condition.

More work is needed over the next few years to bring remaining aggressive weed species down to very low levels. Will we be able to eliminate them entirely? Time will tell!

While working in Porteous Park we are often joined by Carnaby's cockatoos feeding in parrot bush (*Dryandra sessilis*) only a few metres away. This year we have seen at least one fledgling being fed by its mother. Sadly, cockatoo numbers are down on what they were just five years ago. Preserving our local bushland can only help this threatened species.



David (left) and Kara with bulbous weeds gladiolus and Cape tulip following only two hours work in August 2012 using our specifically designed 'super trowel'. Photo – Mike Norman

Our website [www.porteouspark.org.au](http://www.porteouspark.org.au) features photos of the flora and fauna of Porteous Park. For more information on activities contact Mike on 0438 710 527 or [mike.norman@bigpond.com](mailto:mike.norman@bigpond.com).