

# **GOLDEN VALLEY TREE PARK**

## **ANNUAL REPORT JULY 2024 TO JUNE 2025**

### **Governance**

The Management Committee of Golden Valley Tree Park (GVTP) Incorporated held monthly meetings for each month throughout the year except January. The Annual General Meeting was held in August 2024. Minutes from all meetings are stored on Dropbox.

The committee at year-end were: Robin Wright (Chair), Yulia Novikova (Vice Chair), Garry Middle (Secretary), Tom Benson (Treasurer), Andrew Thamo (Curator World Collection), Natasha Moore (Curator Australian Collection), Ania Boltuc, Stuart Walls, Rob Mann, Stelle Evangelista (DBCA Representative). Kevin Haig retired from the committee and his contribution as treasurer was suitably acknowledged. Tom Benson was welcomed to the committee as his replacement. Brian de Garis is our patron.

A review of actuals vs budget for the 2024 / 2025 year revealed that income, mainly through donations, was higher than expected. Expenditure was significantly less than budgeted, due mainly to expected maintenance work not materialising. Thereby accumulated assets for GVTP Inc. increased in the financial year. A new budget will be prepared for the 2025 / 2026 year.

### **Partnerships**

As joint manager of the Tree Park, a good working relationship was maintained with the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). DBCA has continued with undertaking regular maintenance tasks include spraying, grass management, firebreak and general maintenance as well as two visits per week to the toilet blocks. Grading of access roads has been undertaken when required, as has replacement of hazard and advisory signs (eg. "take your rubbish with you").

DBCA has also been implementing the Conservation Management Strategy for the Homestead in a phased manner as budget allows. Work in the year included replacement of guttering and removal of garden beds from immediately around the house to help reduce damp ingress. Extensive arborist work has also been done on old oak trees near the Homestead.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DBCA and GVTP Inc has been drafted to formalise the working relationship between the joint managers of the Tree Park. Once finalised, it is intended to prepare an Operations and Maintenance Plan to clarify respective roles and responsibilities.

The threat to the unique ambience of the Tree Park posed by the proposed rezoning of surrounding land for housing by the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup has not been resolved.

This was revealed in the issuing of a draft planning strategy in April 2024. Despite the 141 public submissions opposing this, the Shire has still not revised the draft document. On 20 June 2025 the Chair of the Golden Valley Tree Park met with the CEO of the Shire to reiterate the concern on this issue. The CEO stated that he expected the planning strategy to be finalised early in 2026.

### **Visitations**

The Golden Valley Tree Park continues to be a very popular attraction for local residents and tourists, particularly in the April to June period when the leaves on many trees are turning to their autumn colours.

### **Volunteering and Events**

The volunteer hours expended in the Tree Park are a testament to its popularity.

DBCA organised a joint volunteer day with the Bibbulmun Track volunteers in September 2024. Works completed during this busy bee including:

- Mulching part of the Bibbulmun track through the Tree Park
- Removal of sapling elms at the back of the old homestead
- Oiling the welcome bridge
- Pruning selected trees and weeding the cleaver from around the mulberry tree adjacent to the Bibbulmun track near the homestead.

A further “Busy Bee” was held in January 2025 to trim dead and dying branches from trees near the picnic area and create piles for burning.



The “Merry Men” continue to be active in undertaking a number of activities including mowing and clearing fallen twigs and branches.

## Trees

The ramifications of the record dry winter of 2023 continued into the spring of 2024 with the demise of over half of *Betulaceae* family species. Although all Birches and Alders leafed out it seems that some could not regenerate the fine feeder roots that were lost in the previous dry, and the trees suddenly expired once they had exhausted stored reserves. A specific busy bee was held to clean away the dead trees along the route of the Sequioa short walk while DBCA dealt with the larger outliers.

The problems extended into the past summer with many of the Elms, Oaks and Poplars that had been planted by the original European settlers shedding portions - in some cases very large portions of their crowns - resulting in the need for successive cleanups.

These problems have created increased recognition that more arboricultural work needs to be done to extend the longevity of the older trees particularly.

New plantings are an important part of maintaining an appropriate age structure for trees in the Tree Park into the future. More planting was done throughout the Park and particularly in the vicinity of Yungerup Spring. Another 14 new accession species were planted in spring 2024 with half a dozen more to follow in the coming spring along with replicates of some of the previous fourteen.

The project to extend the labelling of trees in the World Collection has also continued. Besides adding new posts and labels to existing trees and new plantings, posts that have become rotten are being replaced and missing labels are also being replaced.



## Maintenance

Routine maintenance of fences, firebreaks, gates and paths continued throughout the year with the assistance of the Park Steward.

The dry conditions meant that above average clean-up of fallen branches was required at several stages during the year.

## **Fund raising**

Donations are a major source of funding for the Tree Park. Collection boxes at the World Collection and Australian Collection have suffered from vandalism in the past and have repeatedly been repaired. The latest act on 26 May 2025 of vandalism and theft has left donation boxes at the car parks irreparable, and limited cash donations have been collected from these locations since May. A new design of collection box is being investigated as is surveillance by security cameras.

Cashless donations through the use of a QR code are available and this means of donation is growing in popularity. QR code labels are affixed to the existing donation boxes and at other strategic locations in the Tree Park. Unfortunately, these are also being vandalised so a more durable QR code on a metal plate with an anti – graffiti coating is to be attached to the new donation boxes once built.

## **Sponsorships**

There are many ways in which the local and the broader community shows support and appreciation for the Golden Valley Tree Park and tree sponsorship is one of them. The personal and the emotional tie to the tree is very meaningful for the sponsor and the funds raised by the tree sponsorship program benefits the park as they are put back into caring for the trees and the necessary maintenance jobs around the park. Despite the economic hardship that many people are experiencing, the support for our park continues to be strong. Six trees were sponsored and we have raised a total of \$3863 from tree sponsorship and \$909 from bench dedication.

## **Communications**

The Golden Valley Tree Park continues to be popular on social media. Committee members and others regularly post on our pages on Instagram and Facebook. The official Facebook page for the Balingup Golden Valley Tree Park has in excess of 3,300 followers.

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068542410469>

An oral history of the park is being worked on, featuring Andrew Thamo, who is one of the co-founders of the Tree Park.

The Golden Valley Tree Park web site is also kept up to date by Pam Williamson and provides a valuable source of information for visitors.