



Project Snapshot

Land Manager's Name/s:	Ivan and Helen Lee
Property Size:	4000ha
Location:	Bulyee
Catchment group	Gabby Quoi Quoi
Annual Rainfall:	320mm
Farm size	2766 hectares
Enterprise mix	Mainly cropping, some livestock
Soil types/vegetation types:	Sand, sandy loam, gravel over clay

Key Messages

- It is important to understand how water flows onto and off your property.
- Trees have multiple benefits. Consider plantings on your property to improve the broader catchment
- Plant trees along recharge zones to stop the spread of salinity lower down in the landscape.

Their story

Situated low within the landscape of the Corrigin shire is Wilcurra farm. Ivan and Helen Lee have spent their lives working this 4000ha property and naturally they have developed an intimate understanding of the land. They are well aware of how the water moves through the soil, recharging the sprawling saline valley floors and the adjacent Avon River. For as long as Ivan can remember these saline valley floors have been a permanent feature of the low lying landscape, however recently some patches have started to spread across the flats. "For thirty years we had a functional dam, but it is salty now", Ivan mentioned. To stop the salt encroaching into his good cropping country Ivan began pumping water out of these salty areas. "Removing the excess water with the pumps was doing a good job but this became too expensive with the rising cost of power and was no longer feasible for us to continue", Ivan said. He also tried deep drains, but found that the water didn't move quickly enough through the clay based soils.

These modest farmers have been planting trees for many years, recognising long ago that trees can help to lower the rising water table and provide cover to reduce erosion. The Lee family heard about the Soil Conservation Incentives Program via the local Corrigin Farm Improvement Group and decided to apply for tree seedlings. During the winter of 2012 they machine planted approximately 50ha around the worst areas of the salt with 6,500 oil mallees (*Eucalyptus gratiae*) and 20,000 old man saltbush (*Atriplex nummularia*).

Lessons Learnt

Funding is a great financial help, but taking on a project like this requires a lot of drive and hard work to be successful. Ivan pointed out that the family put in about 80 hours of their time to prepare and plant the site. "It pays to get labour organised," Ivan said. "Particularly when you're planting such a vast area". This year another 15,000 saltbush will be sown to account for those not supplied due to stock shortages in 2012.

The trees were not fenced off given the Lee's prominently crop their land and run only a few hundred sheep. The oil mallees and saltbush in this case were selected purely as a 'best fit' in the landscape. Ivan added, "Saltbush can be useful if you have greater sheep numbers, but it wasn't a motivation for us. As the planted area is unfenced the surrounding paddocks will only be lightly grazed until the trees establish."

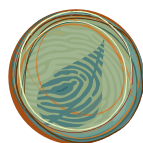
Ivan and Helen's son Stephen has been home for a number of years now and they hope along with his wife Amy and newborn daughter Macey they will continue to build on their legacy.



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