

Master TreeGrower South East : Wrap-up Report

Bega, NSW, September - December 2022

This course was commissioned by the South East NSW Regional Forestry Hub with funding from the Australian Government, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Summary

The Master TreeGrower Course, delivered by Rowan Reid of the Australian Agroforestry Foundation, is an 8-day, field based, course for landholders wanting to begin farm forestry projects on their land, but don't know where to get started.

35 landholders, managing 2000 hectares of land, participated from across the SE region of NSW over four two-day teaching blocks based in Bega.

Sessions were presented on topics such as silviculture, markets, native forests and risks by a range of educators including:

Rob de Fégely, South East NSW Regional Forestry Hub
Annabel Kater, Australian Sustainable Timbers
Joel Dawson, Forestry Corp
Dennis Pollack, LLS Private Native Forests
Norm Walker, South Coast Timber
John Fogden, Southern Training



Outcomes

Empowering private landholders to diversify into forestry

- Demonstrating that forestry can be a valuable part of land management, asset building, and a diversified income.
- Understanding forestry models such as plantation vs native forest management, for a variety of outcomes.
- Explaining the silvicultural techniques used by the industry, and how they relate to farm forestry.

Building a connection to the forestry industry

- Visited the South Coast Timber (SCT) mill in Eden to understand how private landholders can become a part of the supply chain of timber products.
- Site visit with Joel Dawson from Forestry Corp to discuss the potential of a native forest.

Building the network of growers

- Helping to build the South East Agroforestry Network, a special interest group in the region, by inspiring new projects, upskilling, and growing the member base.

Feedback

Participants reported being very satisfied with the course overall, and said that they would recommend the course to other landholders.

In a rating system out of 10, with 10 being the highest, the following statements had an average rating of 9 or higher:

Silviculture:

“I now have a greater understanding of the science of trees and their management.”

“I have learnt new and useful skills in tree and forest establishment and management.”

Production:

“I’m now more likely to plant trees for timber products”

“I’m now more likely to manage existing trees for timber products”

Networking:

“I see myself as part of a network of land holders with common interests”

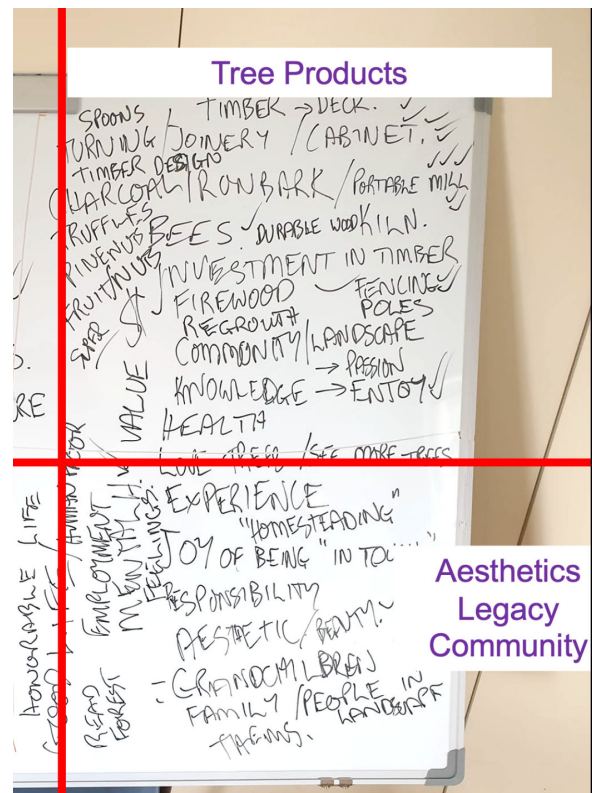
“I am more willing to share my tree growing and management experiences with other landholders”

Delivery

The course was delivered over four two-day blocks:

Day 1 & 2 – Rowan began with an introduction to the course and presented Bambra Farm, his home property, as an example of farm forestry over time. Participants were given an opportunity to introduce themselves and their interest in joining the course. Session on markets for timber and other wood products, talking about the qualities of certain species and the differences between plantation and non plantation timber.

Site Visits - Visited the South Coast Timbers (STC) hardwood mill in Eden. Visited a mixed forest of plantation timbers and Rowan demonstrated pruning techniques. Visited a participant's farm to discuss recent plantings and future plans.



Day 3 & 4 – Rowan gave a presentation on tree and forest measurement – how to document changes in a forest over time - and participants were given their MTG diameter tape.

Annabel Kater, guest lecturer, spoke about her experience managing native forests for a sustainable harvest. Led discussion about 'reading' the native forest, and how to create plots and forestry plans.

Site Visits - Visited a couple of plantation forests 30 years old of different species to discuss growth rates and thinning techniques.

Visited a participant's native forest property with Norm Walker from SCT to discuss the potential for harvesting. Discussion about how relevant laws translate on the ground.

Day 5 & 6 – This third block was delivered by local presenters, outside of the classroom setting.

Day 5 was held at Blairland's Hill Forest Farm, the home of Rob de Fégely.

Rob introduced his property, and gave an introduction to the history of the forestry industry in Australia.

John Fogden from Southern Training gave a demonstration of pruning and felling techniques in a plantation forest.

Joel Dawson from Forestry Corp joined us on a walk through the native forest to discuss the potential for silviculture and harvest.

Day 6 was held on the farm of Ben Buggy, the local course coordinator, and looked at techniques for establishing new timber plantations, managing regrowth for harvest, and whole property planning.

Site Visits - We also had time to visit two other properties of course participants.



Day 7 & 8 – Rowan gave a presentation on the economics of farm forestry with an emphasis on asset creation - providing the basis for gradual and ongoing investment. Ben Buggy gave a presentation on mapping diverse native forests.

Watched a video from Firesticks Alliance.

The final day began with a presentation from Rowan about aesthetics and how they can motivate and lead to innovation in farm forestry.

Dennis Pollack from LLS gave an intro to Private Native Forestry Plans.

Participants were presented with their Master TreeGrower gate sign.

Site Visit - Our final visit was to a property of a forester, Bruce Hamilton, where we spoke about the changes in the forest there over the past 40 years and his approach to management and harvesting.