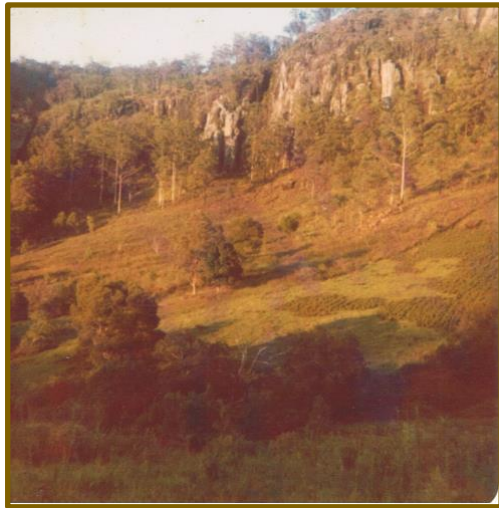
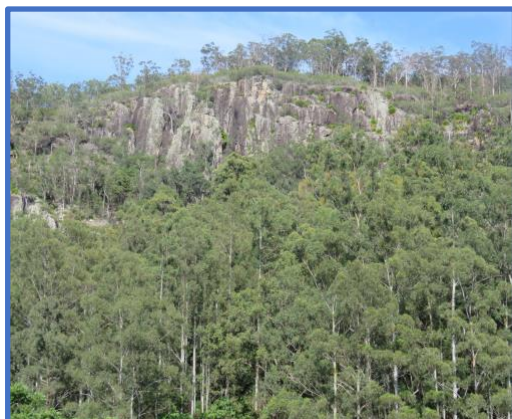

HOW TO GROW A FOREST...

Have you recently bought some land or thought about how you can return some or all of your existing land to native forest? Well, we have found two enthusiasts who have made this happen. Ken Williams and Adrian George are in the process of restoring a 40-hectare property that was once degraded farmland into what is now a veritable haven for native flora and fauna species.

From this...



To this...



We asked Ken and Adrian for their tips, their tricks and to share the pitfalls. Here is what they had to say.

1. *Why the tree change?*

Life in Sydney was becoming less rewarding and I realized I was only there to earn an income, though I did enjoy what I did. Space, quietness, diversity and 'not having to constantly compete', were all becoming more important.



Ken and Adrian

2. *How did you decide where to start?*

Back then it was never a conscious decision. We just started with the worst lantana areas, (the gullies) - with a brush cutter! In more recent years planning each project carefully based on our resources has become important.

Advice to our younger selves would be:

- ◆ Start with defining our 'resources'. (labour, knowledge, equipment, finances.)
- ◆ Start with a realization that this is not going to happen unless you make it happen. It's up to you!
- ◆ Start with a property map, dividing up different 'zones', eg. good, bad, easy, hard, high/low priority, etc.
- ◆ Attend every field day you can get to.
- ◆ Contact your local Land Care groups and Landcare support services.
- ◆ Talk with your neighbours to see if they have common interests.
- ◆ Start reading and compiling relevant literature on bush regen. techniques, weed identification, species identification.
- ◆ See what resources your local council might offer.
- ◆ Once you have carefully accessed your 'resources', select a

project/goal that is achievable, based on those resources. (It may only be weeding a few meters of your creek line every weekend, - or it may be removing lantana from that big gully up the back.



Helmholtzia Gully 2016

- ◆ Whatever it is, it must be designed/selected based on your ability to achieve a successful outcome.

3. *How did, and do you, decide what to plant and where?*

As we gained more plant knowledge the importance of starting with fast 'pioneers' became apparent. Mark at **Firewheel Nursery** greatly helped with species selection.

4. *Where do you source your plants?*

At first local markets, then Mark at **Firewheel Nursery** was really helpful. We now grow a lot of our requirements ourselves. We have used, **Burringbar Rainforest Nursery**, **Eastern Forest Nursery** and a couple of smaller local growers.



Pink Foambark (Jager pseudorhus). Iain Stych(photo)

5. *How do you look after the plants in the initial stages of growth?*

Wallaby protection, (wire cages), mulching, weed control, and some watering through the first summer (but not Eucalyptus plantings). We use hydrated water crystals and slow release fertilizer with rainforest species.



Protection of trees

6. *What support services do you access?*

At first NLSS and Bob Jarman were our heroes! Jiggi land care has included us in some grant funding which has been helpful both in terms of labour help and focusing our efforts which have had to increase as a result of funding. LCC have been very helpful in recent years.

7. *What grants have you accessed to support your endeavours?*

Enviro fund (2007), Catchment Management Authority (2007-11), NSW Environment trust (2012 to present), Lismore Council Rural Landholder Initiative grant (2016), NPWS (2016-present). Unfortunately, on every level, funding is becoming increasingly difficult. The LCC RLI programme offers small grants to individuals, but every round becomes more competitive. Talk with your local land care group about being part of a larger funding application.

Remember, even if you are lucky enough to be part of a successful grant application it's not a magical bullet. It won't just happen of its own accord

overnight. Achieving your goal is still down to you, - **YOU AS THE MAIN RESOURCE!**

8. *How do you keep track of your achievements?*

Careful 'before' photo records from established photo points, then 6 monthly intervals. Annual reports for ongoing grants, some have required transect line monitoring.



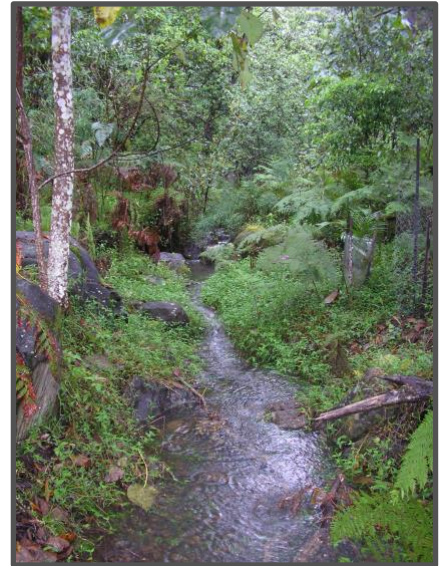
Koala Planting 2015



Koala Planting 2017

9. *How do you remain motivated?*

Seeing the improvement on the ground is enough to keep us motivated. Knowing that you can make a difference is a huge incentive to keep going. As well, we run a mentoring group which allows us to connect with other people who are doing restoration projects on their land.



Secret Gully 2010

10. *What do you hope to leave as your legacy?*

We currently have an application for a Conservation Agreement for the western half of the property (27 Ha), which will protect this area 'in perpetuity'. I hope to reintroduce a little pocket of healthy developing sub-tropical rain forest which will provide a seed pool in the area as well as providing healthy habitat for native fauna.

Finally, if you would like to find out more about Ken and Adrian's adventures at Mountain Top, checkout their Facebook page – [Grass Roots Mentoring](#)