

Our “Steppables”- 2018



The low, green steppable ground cover that you see in both front and back gardens has been a great success. In the early years we used mulch or forest litter etc. to protect the plants and to mark pathways. However, that gave the garden too many dry, brown areas for our taste. Now the various greens and flowers unify our garden with an lush flower meadow underlay that is almost wholly Australian.

Native steppables include *dichondra repens*, native violets (*viola hederacea*), white and blue pratia and Baby's Tears (*soleirolia soleirolii*). We classify the Golden Creeping Jenny growing in and near the bottom pond as a “damp conditions plant” rather than a steppable. We did not continue with the *Nierembergia repens* that was on trial at our 2016 Open Garden, but we have used *dichondra argentea* Silver Falls in drier areas of the garden. It is native to the southwestern United States.

On the reverse page are some of the nursery tags for our steppables. We initially acquired the plants as tube stock from several stores including Bunnings, Magnet Mart and Cool Country Natives in Pialligo (first on the left when you turn in). Now we also “cut and paste” patches from areas where the steppables are thriving (or are becoming feral) to areas where they are yet to be established. Digging holes for new plants in areas already planted with steppables also generates patches for transplanting.



Our steppables have not been completely plain sailing. They can be invasive/aggressive/feral, particularly the native violets, so some other plants need a protective ring to stop the steppables smothering them. Mulch can be effective but can become water resistant (a spray-on wetting agent will solve that problem), and the invading violets will still need to be removed from time to time. Recently we found that a small flat rock placed under spreading plants such as the various varieties of *scaevola* appears to be more successful in the longer term.

By the way, we have seen both “steppable” and “stepable” spelling used for these plants. “Stepable” just looks ugly!