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Move or Mulch ?

In this age of increased environmental awareness, and the importance of carbon trading, the current drought and subsequent water shortages have caused many to become more aware of the needs to preserve existing trees, these triggers have set into play the mechanisms which for the first time sets a value on an individual tree for other than its monetary value. Aspects such as streetscapes, parklands, shade creation, wildlife habitats, reforestation projects and carbon sinks bring into play the importance and true value of these living parts of our environment. Ace of Spades is proactively achieving these goals by taking a leading role with its hands on approach to these essential environmental areas, however life is never that simple as Russell relates.

Remove and mulch a classified noxious weed.

It had been a long day on the tools for everybody from Ace of Spades, rushing to complete the day we had to drop in and quote on a stump grinding job. On arriving Wayne showed us around a number of stumps requiring grinding on the following day. A group of Wayne's friends had been tree cutting on the previous weekend - he informed me that they had not yet cut down the camphor laurel yet.

Walking around the back of the house Wayne reached up and pulled some leaves off the tree. "Look its a camphor laurel" Wayne said. "Here smell it". I had to turn away with a smile as Wayne had given me leaves from a *brachychiton rupestris* (Qld Bottle tree). The glossy head and the bulbous trunk was a dead giveaway. Even though it was heavily shrouded with years of ivy growth which did its best to hide its true identity the characteristics of bottle tree were evident.. I asked Wayne if there was any chance that we could retain the tree where it stood. This was not possible as it was on the property fence line and had to be removed, as well there was a second smaller brachy in the firing line of progress. On a closer inspection I found that the larger brachy was about 35 years of age and had a classic bottle shaped trunk, a particularly healthy and symmetrical crown together with the brachy's characteristic markings on the trunk. Wayne was happy for the trees to be relocated particularly when he understood that this was a "home grown" protected Australian native and these did not require permits to remove them.

A quick plan of action

There was a need to have the trees removed within a few short days to permit the scheduled construction to continue. The situation called for a quick plan of action and the urgent booking in of excavators, float, crane, tree spade and other necessary equipment got underway. The team were on the job early next morning and after a few hours of tricky work we were loading the larger specimen onto the arranged transport which would take it to our holding yards (The Orphanage) where it was re-planted into a prepared site and photographs were sent via 3G to head office who were anxiously waiting to publish the good news on the Ace of Spades web as well as informing a number of prospective buyers of this unexpected find.

Interest was immediately evident as a number of Ace of Spades clients expressed their desire to acquire these trees. The larger trees luck had certainly changed for the better as a wonderful new home was found for it as the centre piece of The Bottle Tree at Springfield Lakes at Springfields

Lakes situated between Brisbane and the famous Gold Coast.

Meeting a deadline for the opening of the The Bottle Tree at Springfield
Lakes

Tony, owner of The Bottle Tree at Springfield Lakes has received many compliments on his new acquisition and is proud to have been able to present one of the classic Australian natives as the prime feature for his new Centre.

Ace of Spades received the following email from Tony telling us of his journey to acquire a brachychiton.

"The Bottle Tree at Springfield Lakes

The establishment of a new retail garden centre at Springfield Lakes had been a long term goal for my business partner and I.

The Queensland Bottle Tree (*Brachychiton rupestris*) had long been one of my favourite trees and it was this factor more than any other that resulted in us naming the garden centre as "The Bottle Tree at Springfield Lakes". Having christened the business with this name, it was obvious to be credible we would need a real tree! The garden centre was being constructed on a green field site so transplanting a tree was the only option.

I had a ready source of mature bottle trees from a property near Bell that is owned by my brother.

While my brother was willing to give us as many trees as we wanted, it soon became apparent that whether we were actually allowed to relocate them under the prevailing State Government was difficult to establish.

The information provided by various State Government Departments on the issue was conflicting and confusing.

While discussing the matter with the various Government Departments and researching the issue further, I became aware of Ace of Spades in Toowoomba.

I contacted Russell from Ace of Spades to discuss the issue further and his knowledge of both arboreal matters, the legislative requirements and the logistics involved in relocating trees was impressive from the start.

To cut a long story short, Russell was able to offer us a Bottle Tree that he had purchased privately and therefore did not require a permit or any other type of government approval in order to be relocated.

After viewing some pictures that had been emailed to me by Russell, we decided to go ahead. The logistics of the relocation then had to be organised.

The site where the tree was to be planted presented a number of challenges. Firstly, the site had been extensively excavated and basically the garden centre was being established on a base of sandstone. There was no topsoil remaining whatsoever.

Secondly, we are tenants on the garden centre site and therefore were not able to control the construction program. Access to the planting site was steadily being obstructed by various items prior to us being able to get the tree to the site.

Ideally, we planned to use a Franna crane to "walk" the tree to the planting hole however due to access problems, it seemed that we would have to use a slew crane.

A hole with a diameter of approximately 3 metres had been dug into the surrounding sandstone. Given the sandstone surrounds, I was concerned about drainage and that the hole may become a "swimming pool" in the event of a big rain.

Given the circumstances however there was little we could do but press on.

After being given the delivery date by Ace of Spades, our tree arrived on the back of a body truck having made the trip from the Ace of Spades yards in Toowoomba.

As circumstances transpired and after a false start with a 50 tonne slew crane, a Franna crane was able to be used to walk the tree to the planting hole.

At this stage of the operation, the expertise of Ace of Spades became more apparent.

Because of the shape of both the trunk and the crown of the tree, planting it was not as simple as plonking it in the hole. One side of the tree had had a few branches removed and as a result there was a bit of a hole in the canopy.

The tree had to be orientated correctly so that it's "best side" was going to be presented to where most people would see it.

Although the changes and instructions to the crane driver were subtle, the tree was manoeuvred so that the optimal orientation was achieved.

The tree has been planted now for in excess of two months and is making new growth. It is very much a focal point of the garden centre and has attracted much comment and enquiry.

One of our objectives at the Garden Centre is to get people considering the use of mature trees as major components of their landscaping projects.

The cost of relocating a feature tree can be a relatively small proportion of the total budget of some residential landscaping projects.

Having a feature tree such as our Brachychiton makes this point a whole lot easier to argue!

The professionalism of Ace of Spades meant the whole project was achieved with a minimum of fuss and with an excellent outcome. "

Melbourne International Garden Show

The smaller off-spring was lifted using our tree spade and was relocated and prepared for delivery to Melbourne for a prominent position in the upcoming Melbourne International Garden Show for The Palm Place Nursery. Soon after the second tree by now known as "baby brachy" had begun its journey to take part in Melbourne's prestigious International Show. Baby brachy provoked great interest from the many visitors to the Palm Place Nurseries exhibit and now it is a full time resident of Victoria and wishes to be known as a Melbournian.

The Palm Place Nursery - Melbourne International Garden Show

A great result for Wayne, Ace of Spades, The Palm Place Nursery, in seeing our "baby" in its element flourishing a long way from home. pic of the orphanage No stumps to grind, no branches to chip and 2 beautiful feature trees being enjoyed on a daily basis by many people who may not otherwise have had an opportunity to see these unique Australians. The obvious answer in this and in many other instances is to "move not mulch" wherever possible.

The Orphanage

Ace of Spades holding yards (The Orphanage)

Visit Ace of Spades on the web at www.aceofspades.com.au or contact the team on the job - mobile: 0438 383 213