

Sowing the seeds for Victoria's future

Hundreds of millions of eucalyptus seeds are currently being spread across Victoria's State forests.

Helicopters are being used to spread the seeds as part of a program to regrow forests which have been harvested to supply wood to Victoria's timber industry.

Every year VicForests actively regrows all harvested areas to ensure the forest returns to its natural state.

When an area has been harvested it undergoes a regeneration burn and is then aerially seeded and monitored to aid the regrowth of the forest.

Nathan Trushell, VicForests General Manager said that regeneration burns give the seeds the best possible chance to grow.

"The burns mimic the process of nature and create a natural ash bed to germinate the seeds. We fly a helicopter over the ash beds seeding a large area in a short period of time.

"We use GPS technology for more accurate seeding as it gives us a higher chance of successfully regrowing the forest," he said.

VicForests holds Victoria's largest store of eucalyptus seeds. These seeds not only re-grow harvested areas but are also used to re-grow other areas which have been affected by bushfires.

"Before an area is harvested, our planners survey the area and collect seeds from native trees so when that area is seeded it will have the best chance of returning to its natural state," Mr Trushell said.

VicForests has 20 tonnes of seeds in storage which is equal to 6.2 million dollars in value. Just one kilogram of seeds contains 250,000 potential trees.

Last year, VicForests seeded almost 2,000 hectares in Gippsland and hopes to seed approximately 1,200 hectares in Gippsland in 2016.

"The way we grow trees replicates that which happens in nature.

"It is a survival of the fittest process whereby natural selection occurs and of the 200,000 seeds sown per hectare only 10,000 seedlings might germinate.

"In another 50 to 60 years there will be around 300 trees per hectare left as part of the growing forest.

"This is all done through a natural, organic process and we don't use herbicides or insecticides of any kind," Mr Trushell said.

VicForests conducts a regeneration survey to test the success of the regrowth 18 months after seeding, if it is successful it's handed back to the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP).



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DELWP will manage that area of forest until it matures over 50 to 60 years and will eventually hand it back to VicForests to begin the process again.

Regeneration is a vital component of VicForests operations that sustains forests for future generations and meets the demand for locally sourced timber products.

VicForests is Australia's largest supplier of native forest hardwood timber and it is important to the industry that we regrow all areas in order to continue to produce the same quality products.

Much of the timber from VicForests' operations is used in products such as high quality furniture, flooring and other building materials.



Image: VicForests contractor using aerial seeding methods