

Why Salt? Harry Whittington and WISALTS : Community Science in Action

By
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'Salinity' is an emotive term which has come to represent in many people's minds the damage that farmers have done to the bush as a result of their clearing and agricultural activities. In reality, this is not such a straightforward explanation. Although it is true, farmers did clear the land, which eventually caused salt scalds to form and land to die, the state government and its agencies must also be considered a major proponent in the equation. Government policies with regard to clearing requirements and creating farms in fragile environments, and their subsequent inability to find 'the' solution is a matter of record.

This book examines the way Harry Whittington found a solution to his own land degradation problems at Springhill, Brookton in Western Australia and the formation of WISALTS (Whittington Interceptor Sustainable Agriculture Land Treatment Society) who promote his technology – Whittington Interceptor Banks. The banks are designed to capture rainwater where it falls by controlling surface and sub-surface throughflows, so that moisture can be utilised throughout the soil profile, thus preventing waterlogging and dead soil in valley floors.

Whittington was a true community scientist in that he researched all available literature to find solutions and then carried out major experimentation to prove the veracity of his ideas. Once satisfied, he promoted his solution and the cause of sustainable agriculture, soil and water conservation to whoever would listen to him - and many did. This book is a history of their work.

ISBN No 0 9580373 5 3

Published by Indian Ocean Books, PO Box 301, Joondalup WA 6919

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