



Marlingu - Mike Kerkmans

Mike's Marlingu farm is at Pindar, 135 km north-east of Geraldton. Mike is a passionate supporter of oil mallees and is an out-spoken former president of the oil mallees Association.

Mike's Story

"I first moved to the property in 1988 and since then I have planted over 500,000 oil mallee trees, which are a small eucalyptus.

"By doing this we have been able to demonstrate the benefits of oil mallees and how they can be combined with a regular farming system.

"Planting oil mallees improves the condition of the land and water resources as they draw water from the ground and lower the water table which helps minimise salinity.

"The trees also play an important role is wind erosion abatement as they are planted on the side of the hill which leads to the drainage areas. As a result the trees slow the water flow and keep more water where it falls.

Mike's take home message
"...Once a tree is in the ground, you don't have to worry about anything else, it just grows..."

"I have also implemented controlled traffic alley farming. The benefits include the reduction in compaction of the soil, and increase productivity as it produces better growth and yield with better water filtration.



Mike talks to bus tour participants about how he was inspired to adopt oil mallees on his farm



Mike shares his knowledge of oil mallees with Matt Micke and Nick Devries

"We try to crop around 5000 ha every year and have another 5000 ha rested or fallowed to help give longevity to the paddock.

"Everyone used to do fallow, that is nothing new; you rest the paddock for one year to conserve moisture for the following year the crop has access to two year's rainfall.

"As far as carbon farming is concerned, there are times we don't get rain. Thus instead of relying on wheat crops, we can have trees on our farms, giving us another stream of income, and hopefully matching long-term lease or wheat-crop costing.

"Once a tree is in the ground, you don't have to worry about anything else, it just grows. We have planted oil mallees every 300 feet within our wheat crops. We grow them for carbon. We are working on a target of making about \$100 per hectare.

"We plan to have 10-15% of our farm planted to oil mallee trees. You get paid around \$350 to plant a hectare of trees, so if you plant 100 hectare a year, that is a good little cash injection."

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