

9. Gunningham Farms: Planting trees to increase shelter, biodiversity and aesthetics



Gunningham Farms, Montumana, Circular Head - The Gunningham's are fifth generation dairy farmers producing organic milk and pasture raised, free-range eggs. The Gunningham's have strategically planted 17 hectares of *P. radiata* and 15 hectares of *E. nitens* at selected sites across their property for shelter, biodiversity and aesthetics.

AT A GLANCE

Owner	Matthew and Pippa Gunningham
Property name	Gunningham Farms
Location	Montumana, Circular Head, north west Tasmania
Property size	480ha
Enterprise	Dairy and free-range eggs
Rainfall	979.1mm
Soil type	Red basalt
Forested area	22.39ha

KEY POINTS

- The importance of species selection.
- Whole farm planning.
- Identifying the best land use for every section of your farm.
- Aesthetic benefits of trees in the landscape.

Introduction

Gunningham Farms is one of seven successful Round 1 Integrated Farm Forestry Demonstration Sites receiving grant funding to develop landscape scale best practice integration of shelterbelts and woodlots into the agricultural landscape.

The Cunningham's are 5th generation dairy farmers are currently milking 700 organic cows and producing free range eggs through their nearly 3,000 laying hens.

Gunningham Farms have established 10.46 hectares of *Pinus Radiata* and 11.93 hectares of *Eucalypt nitens* at selected sites across the property. Strategically planting trees to maximise their full potential for shelter, biodiversity and aesthetics, Gunningham Farms urge others to get on board.

Gunningham Farms enlisted the services of professional forest consultants 'Technical Forest Services' to develop their plan.

Gunningham Farm is made up of 10 individual block plantings - 5 *P.radiata* shelterbelts (site 1), 2 *P.radiata* woodlots (site 2), and 3 *E.niten* woodlots (site 3).



"We are 100% convinced that this is appropriate for a lot of farms. We can already see where we would apply our learnings to our other dairy farms and where we would place additional shelterbelts," Matthew

Gunningham said.

Site 1, Blocks 1,2,3, 4 & 5 *P.radiata* shelterbelts

- Clearing of vegetation and harvest slash
- Heavily grazed prior to cultivation for weed control
- Rip mound
- Fencing
- Manual weeding
- *P.radiata* - 3.7ha
- 96.7% as at October 2022
- Wild radish in mounds
- Drier Winter/Spring 2021 and drier than average 2022 for the north-west
- Refill completed July 2022 with open rooted seedlings
- Ongoing weed control on shelterbelt components

Site 3, Blocks 8, 9 & 10 *E.nitens* woodlots

- Clearing of vegetation and harvest slash
- Rip mound
- Fencing
- *E.nitens* - 11.93ha
- 92.8% as at October 2022
- Browsing animals
- Drier Winter/Spring 2021 and drier than average 2022 for the north-west
- Competition with native eucalyptus and native forests

Watch the video

Matthew and Pippa Gunningham are organic dairy and free-range chicken farmers located at Montumana in Tasmania's far North-West. The Gunningham's have strategically planted a mixture of nitens and radiata pine trees displaying the benefits of creating more biodiversity on farm whilst providing a genuine level of shelter for livestock and reducing water evaporation.

Site 2, Blocks 6 & 7 *P.radiata* woodlots

- Clearing of vegetation and harvest slash
- Species and area
- *P.radiata* - 13ha
- 87.9% as at October 2022
- Browsing animals
- Drier Winter/Spring 2021 and drier than average 2022 for the north-west
- Refill completed July 2022 with open rooted seedlings
- Ongoing weed control on shelterbelt component

