

ISLAND LIFE



THE STICK MAN

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PHOTOGRAPHY **CHRIS KIDD**

Dead dogwood saplings make perfect walking sticks. The skinny trees are an understorey species that find a way to survive with minimal light. They measure between 22mm to 30mm — the perfect size to hold in one's hand.

Ian Farquhar from Swan Bay, who before retiring about a decade ago was the first to grow wasabi in Tasmania, has been making walking sticks out of dogwood saplings for 15 years. He donates the money he makes from them to the Red Cross and estimates it's added up over the years to about \$1000.

He's collected a fair few from forestry sites at Winnaleah in Tasmania's North East, cutting the length out of the tree itself. And he's always looking for the perfect piece that has a grip for a handle at the top. But he doesn't exclusively work with dogwood and is always on the lookout for other suitable timber.

"I just keep my eye out for interesting pieces," Farquhar says. "We roam a bit more widely these days, so when I am wandering around someone's garden I might find a piece and ask them if I could nick that for Red Cross."

Some sticks only take a few minutes to whittle away to a smooth finish, while others have taken the 78-year-old days.

When it's smooth he rubs wax in to protect the timber. No two sticks are the same. Right now he's making a batch of ten. "I just do a wee bit whenever I get some shed time," Farquhar says.

The man who sells them for him at the Scottsdale Art Gallery cafe — Rod Martin — says the customers who buy them love how original they are.

"They have really interesting timber finishes," Martin says. "They are not just like any old stick you can buy. They have a specific design and look about them."

The walking sticks sell for between \$20 and \$100.

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