



SGAP Cairns

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Newsletter 120

Society for Growing Australian Plants (Queensland Region) Inc., Cairns Branch
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Myrtle Rust in Cairns

Stuart Worboys

The disease in the Wet Tropics

Myrtle rust is now officially recognised as present in the Wet Tropics, and poses a threat to all members of the myrtle family in the wetter forests of the north. To gardeners, this is a major concern; to scientists this heralds the beginning of a major ecological catastrophe which we will all watch unfold over the next few decades.

Last November, I reported the disease was caused by *Puccinia psidii*. More recent studies have identified the fungus as *Uredo rangelii*. Its wind-borne spores infect new growth on many species of myrtle family, Myrtaceae. Its host range within the family is extremely wide; however some species are less seriously affected than others. Some species have what is called a "hypersensitive response", where infected leaf cells die immediately, starving the parasite of food and eventually killing it. Other species do not have this protective mechanism, and are eventually overwhelmed by infection.

Official response

Biosecurity Queensland's Myrtle Rust information session, held at the Botanic Gardens Visitors Centre on 7 June, was attended by over 60 persons representing government, council, the nursery industry, the tourism industry and James Cook University. The session reminded us that the disease was not eradicable, but some actions could be taken to slow the spread of the disease. Several fungicides are now registered for use against the disease, with fortnightly applications recommended. We were reminded that both upper and lower leaf surfaces must be sprayed. Councils in south-east Queensland are starting to put in place other controls – tree removal or poisoning of susceptible trees is an unfortunate but necessary action taken by the Gold Coast City Council. Also, selection of disease-resistant cultivars for use in native plantings has started.

Upcoming Activities

SGAP CAIRNS BRANCH
OUTING

3rd Saturday of the month

Cooktown Botanic Gardens.
See text for more details.

SGAP TABLELANDS BRANCH
OUTING.

Sunday after the 4th
Wednesday

Any queries please contact
Chris Jaminon 4095 2882 or
hjaminon@bigpond.com

TOWNVILLE SGAP

Meets on the 2nd
Wednesday of the month,
February to November, in
Annandale Community
Centre at 8pm, and holds
excursions the following
Sunday.

In the Wet Tropics, the disease is confirmed from Mossman Gorge and Smithfield Conservation Park. Last weekend, I saw diseased plants of *Gossia myrsinocarpa* on the Bump Track, in Mowbray River National Park.



Further information

Biosecurity Queensland should be notified of any plants suspected of being infected. This is more about tracking the progress of the disease – its geographical spread and host range. They can be contacted on 13 25 23.

The Queensland Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has published a host list (www.daff.qld.gov.au/4790_19789.htm), and rates species according to their apparent susceptibility or resistance.

Guides to preventing and treating myrtle rust on your property, including legislated quarantine requirements, are also on line at www.daff.qld.gov.au/4790_20270.htm.

SGAP members can do their bit to monitor the spread and impacts of the disease. So, please, keep your eyes open, and report any suspected occurrences of myrtle rust.

Plant Cuttings

The Chillagoe Upside Down Tree

John Elliott (SGAP Townsville Branch)

John Elliott has contributed the following piece in our ongoing conversation concerning the Chillagoe Upside-down Tree. It includes local historical knowledge, so I thought it may be of interest:

“The attached photo was taken by Reg Lockyer in 2008. He lives in Ravenshoe and was born in the Herberton region at a time when walking was the preferred (only) method of transport. He got to know the environment pretty well and has therefore, a wealth of information. He has never heard it referred to as the ‘upside down tree’, nor can he recall any other species so named.



Macropteranthes montana / Bull Waddy / Antique Wood. Emuford Road, 2008.

As you will know it is usually referred to as Bull Waddy, but also quite commonly as Antique Wood. This latter name is particularly popular with those who value its wood, mainly as a collector’s item. Not that there is anything ‘antique’ about the wood, which has distinctive lines of ‘dots’ in it.

I would like to think that like so many common names it comes from a primarily Irish sense of exaggerated bewilderment. So the tree’s appearance would not be ‘old’ but ‘antique’.

‘By the Lord that’s an old looking tree’

'That's not old it's antique!'



Antique wood

This is entirely my conjecture, but not dissimilar to this real life exchange in which someone said to me:

'that's a fine piece of Irish pine you have there'

'Irish?'

'Yes its O'Reagan himself I am sure.'

Oregon Pine!

Then there's Gospel Oak, but that's another story."

Emuford Excursion

Barbara Collins

I recently went with friends to Emuford to wander the hills there are a lot of small mines

about and topaz and azurite samples can be found. There are a number of creeks with very large coarse sand lined by granite boulders. The hills are rough, steep and stony with granite outcrops, grass trees, spear grass and Hyptis (*Hyptis suaveolens*) weed to keep you from becoming too comfortable. There were a lot of interesting shrubs in flower, including some familiar ones:

- An *Acacia* species that could have been one of a number of species *Acacia shirleyi* is one possibility!



- A yellow flowering legume, possibly *Labichea rupestris* (above)



- *Grevillea pteridifolia* (above)
- *Calytrix microcoma* was in full bloom
- *Trichodesma zeylanicum*
- *Haemodorum coccineum* had finished flowering
- A *Dodonea* species was sporting clusters of capsules



- Woolly carnivorous plants – *Drosera lanata* (above)
- *Gastrolobium grandiflorum*
- *Grevillea glauca* sported lots of old pods



- There were a few fringed lilies (above) scattered about.

Name changes

One reason for the changes in scientific names of plants is priority. As a rule, if a plant is properly described in the scientific literature, with a formal Latin description of a properly referenced type specimen, this is the name that must be accepted. Exceptions to this rule are only given in very special circumstances, and require a ruling under the International Code for Botanical Nomenclature (as happened recently with *Acacia*).

The priority rule has just recently been applied to a familiar and common species

from Cairns – the Damson or Sovereignwood, *Terminalia sericocarpa*. It's now recognised that this species is indistinguishable from an Indonesian/PNG species called *Terminalia microcarpa*. Because this name was published first, *Terminalia microcarpa* is now the correct name for this species.

May Excursion Report

Stuart Worboys

May's SGAP outing took eleven of us to the property of new members, Brian Moran and Anthony Lagois. On the slopes above Bayview Heights they have a large developing garden spread over four acres. Seven years of hard work, extensive research and a large capacity on-site water supply have created a lush and diverse terraced hillside park devoted to interesting and beautiful native plants.



Eucryphia wilkiei, in the wild found only on the peak of Mt Bartle Frere



Cleistanthus hylandii – beautiful foliage



Anthony Lagois, Gary Sankowsky, Boyd Lenne



Along the driveway – an avenue of *Syzygium erythrocalyx*. Protected by an electric fence!



Liz with friendly pet.



Hoyas spp.



June Excursion

A reminder that this month's excursion will be the annual working bee at the Cooktown Botanic Gardens. This is always a fun, interesting and social weekend. Information sheets were sent out earlier this month. If you missed this advice, and are still keen to go, please call me after hours on 0488 788 768, or contact Chris Evans (Tablelands Branch) by email on cievans@primus.com.au.

Articles Please!!!

If you have any original articles, or an idea for an article, please send them through. Suitable material includes:

- Excursion reports
- Book reviews
- How to grow a particular species of native plant
- Advice of name changes
- Photos of plants in your garden that are flowering or fruiting.
- Photos and stories of interesting plants with horticultural potential.

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