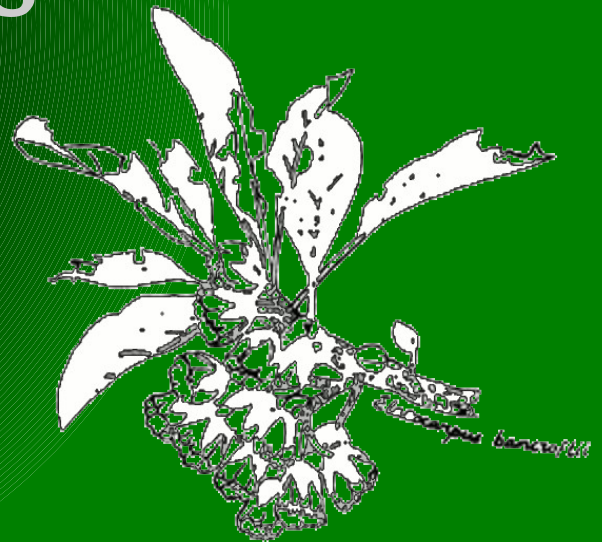


SGAP CAIRNS NEWSLETTER

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NEWSLETTER 174

Society for Growing Australian Plants, Cairns Branch
www.sgapcairns.qld.gov.au

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"What tree is that?" Cairns SGAP tree-spotting on Cairns Esplanade. Photo by Rick Wong.

September excursion report: A stroll along Cairns Esplanade

Don Lawie

Sunday in September – the cool weather is gone, the trade wind is blowing a gale and the sunshine is hot. But we are cool and snug, sitting around one of the many picnic tables in welcome tree shade. Our luncheon discussions range from suitable street trees, support for the Cairns Show next year, crocodile hazards in the Russell River down which we plan to travel next month, support for the Cooktown Botanic Gardens and species of food plants eaten by survivors of the wreck of the *Brig Maria* in 1872.

Cairns Esplanade consists of reclaimed coastal swamp built up by harbour dredge spoil – at least that is how it was being built when I was a boy in the 40's and 50's. It became a pretty run-down area, but in the last decade Cairns Regional Council has effected a renaissance and it is now a wide boulevard with walking and cycling tracks among the trees and a view far out to sea.

The trees were our target for the day. Tony had arranged with Council for us to do a critical survey of Esplanade trees and report on siting suitability, tree health and any other relevant information that may assist Council in their management of these tree assets. We set off with Stuart accessing asset numbers from his magic telephone, Secretary Sandy making copious notes, Rob rattling off reams of information and the rest of us putting in what ancillary info we may have

thought useful. Plus a lot of incidental chatter to confuse the issue!

Many of the Esplanade trees are native to our part of the Queensland Wet Tropics, but there is a mingling of exotic tropical trees which are entirely apt for this recreation area. They mix well and produce an overall effect of shade and restful shape, contrasted at various times by bursts of wonderful tropical tree flowers. An example is the Golden Bouquet Tree *Deplanchea tetraphylla* which have just finished their flowering period. Stuart put a beautiful photo of the tree in flower on Cairns SGAP Facebook page a few weeks ago.

Another spectacular flowering tree was *Brachytiton velutinosus*, used by Council here and as a street tree to showcase the vivid scarlet flowers which burst after the trees have dropped their leaves in the cool weather. *Brachytiton acerifolius*, the Flame Tree which stands out like red beacons in the mountains around Cairns in January, is a close cousin to *velutinosus* which is a drier- country tree not suited to our wet climate. The solution? *Velutinosus* stems are grafted onto *acerifolius* stock to produce a thriving and attractive tree.

A number of Queensland Maple trees (*Flindersia brayleana*), are planted close to the seafront where they are exposed to salt wind and do not look as well as they do in nature. Native to the Atherton Tablelands, Queensland Maple is a handsome tree which is covered with white flowers from November. They are doing a brave job of shielding the other species planted a bit further from the sea, amongst which is their close cousin and Cairns native *Flindersia afflana*, Cairns Hickory named for its tough and durable timber. As Stuart spelled out the species name I thought that, for the first time ever, he had made a mistake: I had learned the name “*ifflaiana*” long ago. Before I could have my moment of glory and point out his error Stuart continued that “*ifflana*” was the original naming but it had been corrupted and had just recently been restored. Stuart: 1 Don : nil. [Editor's note: At the Australian Tropical Herbarium, we had to go through our entire collection of the species, removing the offending "i" from *ifflaiana* on 78 separate labels.]

Mimusops elengi, also called Red Coondoo, Medlar or Bulletwood, is native to Northern Australia and the Indo-Malesian area. Several species caught the eye by virtue of the shape and size and general impression of a tree that invites one to sit and rest. Medlars have showy flowers that are made into garlands in India, and edible fruit. I'll be looking out for them next year.

Baby Ben is a pot plant sold by supermarkets for growing as an indoor decoration. Unsuspecting householders have been known to plant Baby Ben in the front yard and are quite amazed when he becomes *Ficus benjamina*, a giant Banyan-type fig with roots that are capable of uplifting their home. Ben is entirely suitable for the Esplanade and is present in numbers, providing shade and fruit for many birds and promising great growth yet to come.

We had walked about 2 kilometres when we started thinking of returning, but Rob had two special trees he wanted us to meet. The first, in front of Cairns Hospital – a place of memories of healing and dedicated care for Pauline and I – was a Calabash Tree (*Crescentia cujete*), growing with massive multi-trunks and weird purplish flowers growing from trunks and base. The fruit are large and gourd-like and it will be an interesting tree to keep an eye on in the future.

The last of many trees for the day was a Java Cedar, *Bischofia javanica*, a majestic timber tree from Indonesia as its name implies. The bark is used as a dyestuff and also has medicinal properties. The Esplanade specimen was in bud.

Council's make-over has made the Esplanade a magnet for visitors. Shade, seating and open spaces were all being utilised by a throng of people of all ages. The mix of native and tropical exotic trees works very well. My day was made complete by a busking bagpiper skirling the sound of the misty Highlands over the torrid tropical seafront of Cairns – which name originated in the Argyll area of Scotland.

We returned to base for smoko and chats as usual and Stuart departed for his Ice Cream reward. The

above is, of course, only a few of the trees that we examined – Sandy's list will reveal all.

Cairns Esplanade Species List

Compiled by Rob Jago, Stuart Worboys and Sandy Perkins. A full list of trees recorded during the outing has been forwarded to the Cairns City Council, and includes a small number of corrections to the Council's asset register. Exotic trees are marked with an asterisk (*).

Ferns and allies

POLYPODIACEAE

- Drynaria rigidula* (basket fern)
- Platynerium hillii* (elkhorn fern)
- Pyrrosia longifolia* (felt fern)

PSILOTAACEAE

- Psilotum nudum*

Monocots

ARECACEAE

- **Adonidia merillii*
- Archontophoenix alexandrae*
- Carpentaria acuminata*
- **Cocos nucifera*
- **Cyrtostachys renda*
- **Livistona chinensis*
- Wodyetia bifurcata* (foxtail palm)

Eudicots

ANACARDIACEAE

- **Mangifera indica*

APOCYNACEAE

- Allamanda cathartica*
- **Plumeria*

ARALIACEAE

- Schefflera actinophylla*

BIGNONIACEAE

- **Crescentia cujete* (calabash tree)
- Deplanchea tetraphylla* (golden bouquite)

BORAGINACEAE

- Cordia dichotoma* (glue berry)

CASUARINACEAE

- Casuarina equisetifolia*

CLUSIACEAE

- Calophyllum inophyllum*
- Calophyllum sil*

COMBRETACEAE

- Terminalia cattapa*
- Terminalia muelleri*

CONVOLVULACEAE

- Ipomoea pes-caprae* subsp. *brasiliensis*

DILLENIACEAE

- Dillenia alata*

EUPHORBIACEAE

- Excoecaria agallocha*

FABACEAE

- **Cassia fistula*
- **Cassia javanica*
- Castanospermum australe*
- **Delonix regia* (poinciana)
- Peltophorum pterocarpum*
- **Tamarindus indica*

GOODENIACEAE

- Scaveola taccada*

LECYTHIDIACEAE

- Barringtonia asiatica*
- Barringtonia calypttrata*

LYTHRACEAE

- Lagerstroemia speciosa* (crepe myrtle)

MALVACEAE

- Brachychiton australis*
- Brachychiton velutinosus* (flame tree)
- Hibiscus tiliaceus* (cottonwood)

MORACEAE

- Ficus*
- Ficus benamina* (Big Ben)
- **Ficus deltoidea*
- **Ficus lyrata*
- Ficus microcarpa*
- **Ficus microcarpa* var. *hillii*
- Ficus virens*

MYRTACEAE

- Melaleuca leucadendra*
- Syzygium alliiligneum*
- Syzygium angophoroides*
- Syzygium forte* subsp. *forte*
- Syzygium hemilamprum* subsp. *hemilamprum*
- **Syzygium jambos* (rose apple)
- Syzygium luehmannii*
- Syzygium tierneyanum*

- Xanthostemon chrysanthus* (golden penda)

PHYLLANTHACEAE

- Bischofia javanica* (Java cedar)

POLYGONACEAE

- **Coccoloba uvifera*

PROTEACEAE

- Buckinghamia celsissima*

RHIZOPHORACEAE

- Carallia brachiata*

RUBIACEAE

- **Ixora*

RUTACEAE

- Flindersia brayleana* (Queensland maple)
- Flindersia ifflana* (Cairns hickory)

SALICACEAE

- Scolopia braunii* (flintwood)

SAPINDACEAE

- Cupaniopsis anacardioides* (tuckeroo)

SAPOTACEAE

- Mimusops elengi* (red coondoo)



Terminalia muelleri, outside the hospital, coming into new leaf. Photo by Rick Wong.



The fluffy, nectar-filled flowers of *Syzygium forte* subsp. *forte*. Photo by Rick Wong.



Rick, Sharren, Don, Sandy, Pauline, Coralie, Rob, Bianca and Val, standing in the shade of *Bischofia javanica*.



Psilotum nudum, the skeleton fern. Photo by Rick Wong.



The ubiquitous shrub of tropical beaches - *Scaevola taccada*.

Thornton Peak Expedition

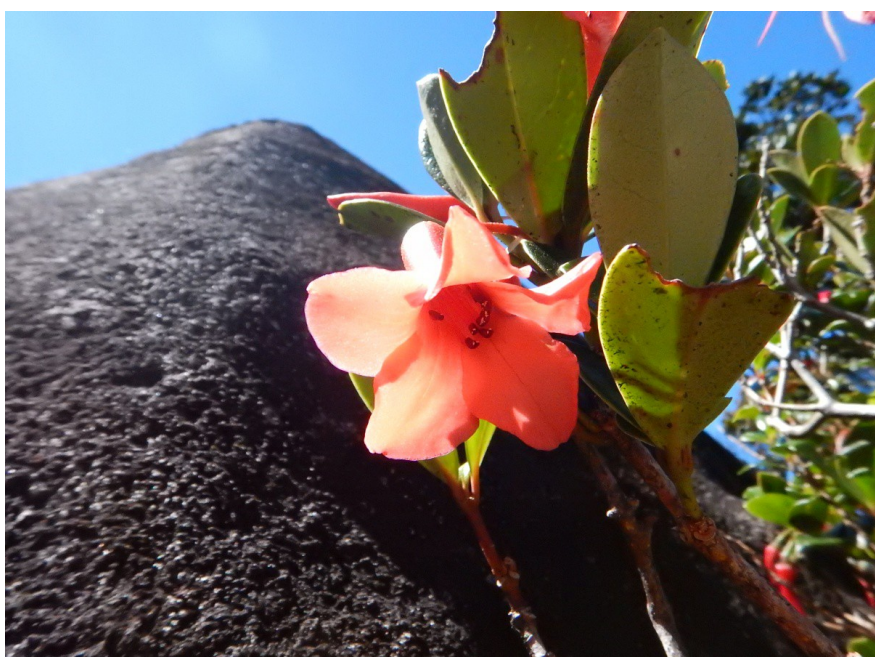
Over the last 18 months, the Australian Tropical Herbarium has lead a series of expeditions to the Wet Tropics' highest peaks, with a focus on sampling populations of *Rhododendron viriosum* and *Rhododendron lochiaie*. The final of these expeditions took place in August, with six people spending four nights on Thornton Peak. The trip was successful way beyond what we could have hoped for. We rediscovered *Hymenophyllum whitei*, a tiny fern listed as presumed extinct, and found two more populations of the recently described *Geosiris australiensis* (see the story of its discovery in Australian Geographic: www.australiangeographic.com.au/news/2017/07/new-species-of-flower-found-in-the-daintree-rainforest). The bryologist on the expedition found several new mosses, and we may even have discovered a new species of snail. Below are a few photos from the trip, which was blessed with good weather.



An amazing view across the cloud-filled Daintree River valley from Thornton's western ridge, on the morning of our departure.



The tiny, delicate flower of *Geosiris australiensis*, found on Thornton by Matt Renner and Tim Hawkes. Photo by Tim Hawkes.



Rhododendron viriosum growing amongst boulders on the western ridge. The black stamens that characterise this species are clearly visible.



The author, measuring and sampling *Rhododendron viriosum*.



The highest point of Thornton Peak, framed by mossy old Daintree Pines, *Gymnostoma australiana*. Photo by A. Field.



Bubbia whiteana, a primitive flowering plant restricted to Thornton Peak and nearby Mt Pieter Botte.



Bottlebrush orchid, *Dendrobium smiliae*, growing in open woodland on the western side of the mountain.



Balanops australiana.



Campsite in one of the many natural ferny clearings on the mountain. Photo by Ashley Field.

Cairns Show, 2018

At the last meeting, it was agreed by all members to raise the prize money (for overall most points awarded to native plants exhibits) from \$20 to \$25. We will also include SGAP membership for one year (which includes state and local branch fees).

What's happening in SGAP north Queensland...

Tablelands Branch

Meetings on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Excursion the following Sunday. Any queries, please contact Chris Jaminon on 4091 4565 or email hjaminon@bigpond.com

Townsville Branch

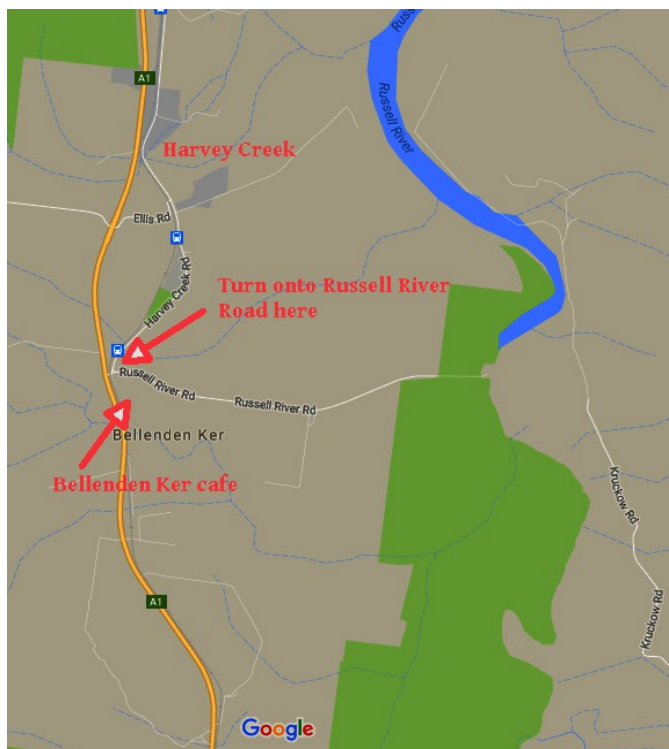
Wednesday 11 October 2017. Meeting at Annandale Community Centre. Guest speaker, Greg Calvert, will discuss sub-Antarctic plants. **Sunday 15 October 2017.** Excursion to the Townsville Palmetum. Meet at Tumbetin Lodge at 9a.m. Contact John Elliott (jw-elliott@aapt.net.au) for more details.

Cairns Branch

Meetings and excursions on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

Sunday 15 October 2017. Our next outing is the long-anticipated trip to Russell Heads, escorted by Patsy Penny. We'll meet at Bellenden Ker Landing at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday 15 October, and transfer by boat down to Russell Heads. For those travelling from Cairns, head south along the Bruce Highway, passing through Gordonvale, Fishery Falls, Deeral and finally Bellenden Ker. At the Bellenden Ker cafe, turn left on to Russell River Road and follow that road to its end. Bring lunch, plenty of water, sunscreen, SANDFLY REPELLENT, crocodile repellent.

RSVP: Thursday 11 October. secretary@sgapcairns.org.au



A reminder that punctuality is vital for October's excursion. This is what the Russell River looks like at low tide. Time and tides will wait for no-one!