



SGAP Cairns Newsletter

May 2018
Newsletter 179

Society for Growing Australian Plants, Inc.

Cairns Branch.

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Editor's Note

You may have noticed this month's newsletter is not as "flashy" or to the standard we have come to expect each month from our newsletter editor, Stuart, that is because he is taking a well earned holiday! However, what we lack in pizzazz we have made up in content! Don has kindly put together a report on our trip to Ella Bay (which was a great day out, btw) and the plant of the month including an interesting google translation. And of course, there are the details on our next excursion to Emerald Creek Falls. Looking forward to seeing you all in May.

Sandy Perkins

Excursion Report



A good turn out for the Ella Bay Excursion

Photo: Stuart Worboys

ELLA BAY (HEATH POINT)

Sunday 15 April 2018

By Don Lawie

The beach and dune walk planned for 11 March was cancelled due to heavy rain, local flooding and road washouts. Indeed, damage to Ella Bay Road was so bad that it was closed at Heath Point, the southern arm of Ella Bay, when we arrived on 15 April. Nothing daunted, we set off along the beach but were soon blocked by sharp volcanic rocks so diverted to the road and walked up a steep hill then returned to the beach beyond the rock barrier.

The aim of the day was to discover what plants – trees, shrubs, vines etc.- grew in the area with fruits that would conceivably be eaten by shipwrecked mariners who were not knowledgeable about their edibility or otherwise. Our particular reference was to the eight men, survivors of the wrecked Brig *Maria*, who came ashore at Ella Bay on 1 March 1872. They subsisted on plant food, then fish and shellfish provided by the local aboriginal people and were rescued by HMS *Basilisk* after two weeks of privations.



Ella Bay Excursion

Photo: Andre Guernier

Our group from Cairns SGAP was augmented by Innisfail NPQ group and other interested friends. About 22 of us gathered for a souvenir photo before beginning the food search. We were only able to comb a very small portion of the area which was repeatedly walked by the *Maria* men and so our results were accordingly slim. We did however find a number of the fruits that were reputedly eaten by the castaways, but missed many.

Prominent among the “Target Fruit” found were a *Pandanus* species – possibly the one eaten in 1872, *Elaeocarpus bancroftii* – the fruit that the castaways found very hard to crack – and *Castanospermum australe* or Black Bean, the fruit of which requires prolonged treatment to remove toxins. Black Bean is important to the narrative since it seems to have been a staple food of the aboriginal people of the area and was supplied to the *Maria* men. They found it tasteless, but at least filling.

Not found on the day: Herbert River Cherry *Antidesma bunioides*, Native Banana *Musa banksii*, and any species of *Syzygium*. There was a large stand of Cunjevoi *Alocasia brisbanensis*, where we parked the vehicles. A scrap of burnt Cunjevoi was tried by a castaway which resulted in a paroxysm of pain and vomiting.



Ella Bay Excursion

Photo: Andre Guernier

Of the 28 fruiting species found, 18 were edible or potentially edible and 10 were not edible or simply toxic. One must pity the castaways – there was little enough of any species’ fruits and eating them was akin to a gourmet version of Russian Roulette.

We enjoyed a day of discovery during a pleasant walk and all agreed that we would not like to be shipwrecked on this beach.

The plant list was compiled from those of Rob Jago and Stuart Worboys, with additions from Barb, Elaine and Jenny. Thanks to all and my thanks to all who attended on the day.

HEATH POINT FRUITING PLANTS

15 April 2018

EDIBLE:

Acmenosperma claviflorum . Tree. Fruit Edible

Alpinia caerulea. Blue Ginger. Fruit edible, present, moderately abundant.

Calamus caryotoides. Fishtail waitawhile. A handful of these edible fruits was observed.

Cassytha filiformis. Dodder Laurel. Flowers present. Fruit edible when ripe.

Castanospermum australe: Black Bean. Tree fruiting on road. Beans edible after treatment.

Dillenia alata. Tree. Red Beech. Flower petals and white fruit arils edible.

Elaeocarpus bancroftii. Tree. Quandong. Fruit parts edible. A few fruit available.

Elaeocarpus grandis. Tree. Quandong. “ “ “ “”

Eupomatia laurina. Small Tree. Native Guava. Primitive flowers. A few edible fruit available.

Ficus drupacea. Tree. Fig. Fruit edible but bland. A bucketful available on the rocky headlands.

Ficus microcarpa. Tree. Fig. Presumably edible.

Ficus variegata. Tree. Fig. A few fruit available, most had been eaten by birds or other animals.

Morinda citrifolia. Small Tree. Noni. Several ripe fruit available. (SW: who would want to?)

Pandanus tectorius. Tree. Beach Pandan. Edible fruit.

Scaevola taccada. Shrub. Sea Lettuce. Edible.

Tacca leontopetaloides. Arrowroot. Not fruiting, but bulbs edible after some treatment.

Terminalia catappa. Large tree. Beach almond. (May not have been present in 1872). edible kernel.

Terminalia muelleri. Tree. Mueller's Damson. Edible kernels.

NON-EDIBLE:

Alocasia brisbanensis . Cunjevoi. Not edible, toxic.

Alyxia spicata. Climbing Shrub. Not edible

Calophyllum inophyllum. Tree. Not edible

Canavalia rosea. Edibility Unknown.

Chionanthus ramiflorus. Native Olive. Tree. Inedible.

Cissus hastata and *Cissus penninervis*. Vines. Native grapes. Suspected to be inedible.

Cryptocarya grandis. Laurel. Tree. Not edible

Hedycarya loxocarya. A couple of handfuls of this attractive red fruit were observed . Inedible?

Hypserpa laurina. Vine. Not edible.

Plant Of The Month

Planchonella chartacea : Thin-leaved Coondoo, Dugalla

Don Lawie

Dugalla is a widespread tree to 12 metres high, found from FN Queensland to NSW Northern Rivers (Cooper). Leaves are an attractive bright green with a distinct tapered shape from mid-leaf to base. Fruits are small – 12 – 15 mm long and occur singly or in small bunches; colour of fruit is a shiny brown.

Patsy found a fruiting Dugulla growing on the lower Russell River about 1 km downstream of Bellenden Ker landing and it makes a handsome photo. Fruit are edible, according to Cooper.



Planchonella chartacea

Photo: Patsy Penny

The genus *Planchonella* is very similar to *Pouteria* and according to Rob Jago the two genera are regularly swapped about. One of the target food plants of the Ella Bay region is *Planchonella pohlmaniana* var *pohlmaniana* and the discovery of *P.chartacea* in fruit on the Russell lends credence to *P. Pohlmaniana* also being in fruit at present.

Pauline and I were discussing this and I had Patsy's photo and Rob's email on the subject open on my Galaxy Tablet. I said "I'll ask Google Assistant what she knows about *Pouteria*". Immediately, Google Assistant spoke "This is all I have on Poo Terrier" with the name written then some info about unusual habits of a little dog. This is not Big Brother watching, it is Little Assistant listening!

Innisfail Branch	Townsville Branch	Tablelands Branch
<p>Meetings at 4 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at 1 Stitt Street, Innisfail.</p> <p>Contact: innisfail@npq.org.au</p>	<p>Meetings at 8 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month, February to November, in Annandale Community Centre. Excursions the following Sunday.</p> <p>Contact: johnelliott@sgaptownsville.org.au</p> <p>www.sgaptownsville.org.au</p>	<p>Meetings on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Excursion the following Sunday.</p> <p>Contact: Chris Jaminon on 4091 4565 or email hjaminon@bigpond.com</p>

Cairns Branch Next Meeting

Sunday 20 May, 12pm

Emerald Creek Falls, meet in falls carpark

As usual, we meet for lunch (byo) at 12pm and then head off to explore the flora nearby. Please let Sandy know if you plan to come along via email secretary@sgapcairns.org.au.

How to get there

From Cairns, take the Kennedy Highway towards Mareeba (60 km). Just 3 km before Mareeba turn left onto the signposted Tinaroo Creek Road. Follow Tinaroo Creek Road for about 3 km and then turn left into Cobra Road. After 2 km of bitumen the road is unsealed for the final 6 km. This road is steep in places and can be boggy when wet.

