

Society for Growing Australian Plants Cairns Branch

NEWSLETTER

July 2019

Number 193



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Excursion report July 2019

COOKTOWN BOTANIC GARDENS WORK PARTY 2019

Don Lawie and Stuart Worboys

Cooktown Botanic Gardens is Queensland's northern-most botanic gardens. Established not long after the town's birth in 1873, the gardens are home to historic stone-pitched waterways. and grand and unusual heritage trees. They also lie a short distance from the Endeavour River, where in 1770 Cook beached his damaged ship for repairs after an unfortunate interaction with the Great Barrier Reef.

During their seven week enforced stay, the

botanist Joseph Banks, naturalist Daniels Solander and their party surveyed and collected more extensively than anywhere else on their voyage, making Cooktown arguably the birthplace of Australian scientific botany.

Since 1987, Cooktown Botanic Gardens has been the semi-regular mid-year destination for Cairns and Tablelands branches of SGAP. Over the decades, we have assisted with tasks across the gardens, from weeding to planting, from mulching to bridge renovations.



SGAP Cooktown excursion 2007 - Mary Gandini mulching the Banks and Solander bed, with the SGAP garden well established in the background.

However, our main focus over the years has been the SGAP garden, not far from the Gardens' Powerhouse Museum and visitor's centre. This year, gardens Curator Tony Roberts (and SGAP Cairns Branch President) welcomed about twenty members on a brisk July Saturday morning. Our number was augmented by Jeannie and Daniel, Gardens staff members who had sacrificed their Saturday to work with us. Some present, notably Peter Radke, were present in 1986 at the first SGAP work party here.

Tony led a familiarization walk so that we could appreciate the present state of affairs. A long

wet season plus much work has resulted in a green outlook of neat graveled pathways, low key but effective fencing, and trees, shrubs and vines all thriving and well mulched. An efficient but unobtrusive "pop-up" watering system has assisted with maintaining growth.



On tour through the gardens.

Tony pointed out several heritage trees, including a gnarled old *Libidibia coriaria* (formerly *Caesalpinia coriaria*), one of only a few recorded in Australia, and a massive old *Terminalia catappa*. The latter tree appears under stress, and some tree surgery is planned to reduce its mass.

An old fountain, with a faded and broken giant clam as its centrepiece, is being redeveloped, with exotics replaced by a *Lomandra* garden.



The lily pond.

We were too early to catch the Gardens' only Cooktown Orchid in flower. This flower is well out of

sight, high in a tree, apparently self-sown. Over the years, SGAP has placed several *Dendrobium bigibbums* high in the trees, but they unfortunately they all seemed to have "grown legs" and gone walkabout.

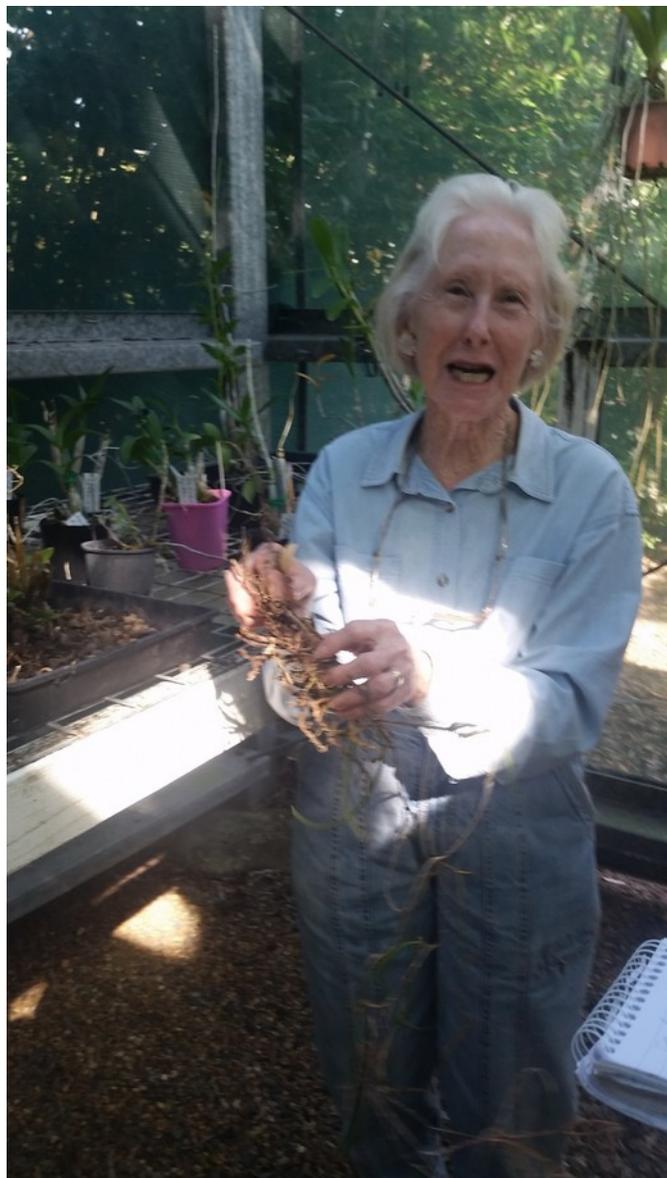
The SGAP and Banks and Solander garden beds were a surprise. Previous expeditions had always commenced with much weeding, culling and mulching, followed by re-planting to replace losses. Today these special gardens were weed-free and thoroughly mulched, and the Banks and Solander garden extended and ready for extra plants. Ultimately, the gardens will be filled with examples of the species collected at the Endeavour River all those years ago. Of particular interest to one of us (DL) was a four metre high *Grevillea pteridifolia*, which was a skinny sapling when he planted it about 15 years ago. It required support then but today is displaying some golden flowers and is destined for a long life of sharing its beauty with all who are fortunate enough to visit here.

Tony discussed future plans for the Gardens. A Federal Government funding injection of \$2 million (promised but not yet delivered) would be used to redevelop the car park, and develop an indigenous-use space complete with totem poles.

Talk over, all hands turned to gardening. The SGAP bed, although well maintained, lacked structure, so we all got to digging and planting to fill edges and gaps with shade-loving greenery such as Dianellas, Lomandras, Alpinias and ferns. An aging vine trellis and its resident *Alyxia spicata* were removed, and the path pushed through to the southern side of

the bed, allowing through passage. Patsy had brought up some very welcome plants which she has nurtured from seed and a range of appropriate plants was sourced from the depot nursery and planted and watered.

Saturday afternoon sped by with the group spreading out to assigned tasks. In the nursery area, Pauline Lawie assisted Gardens staff Jeannie and Jodie with identifying the multitude of rescued orchids in the shade house, and Pauline drew on her expertise in advising on mounting and presentation of this latent treasure store of plants.



Pauline Lawie tending to the residents of the orchid house.

A word here about the nursery - in previous years there was a drainage problem resulting in a muddy floor; today the ground is dry, the propagation area is screened and misted and the "growing-on" plants all labeled and off the ground. Previously, staff shortage had caused a bottleneck in this important area but today the site indicates that caring and dedicated gardeners work here.

Many hands make light work, and indeed the maintenance and upgrading of the SGAP garden was quickly finished, allowing us to relax, chat and join the queue for the shower. Saturday evening featured a barbecue dinner under the trees fringing the neighbouring cricket oval. The setting brought to mind the robbers' camp in the Bizet's *Carmen*, with lights at ground level and dramatic shadows. This time however, instead of Don Jose we had hosts Tony and Trudi officiating over a sumptuous feast of well-prepared food. Conversation centred on future joint activities to better involve the Tablelands, Innisfail and Cairns Branches. Old friends were not forgotten as we recalled Cairns' Life Members Rob Jago and Mary Gandini who were on the sick list.

Sunday was a day of exploring Cooktown's surrounds. We set off for the Bore Fields (a council-owned groundwater source) in high hopes of sighting some Cooktown Orchids. Stuart declared the area a *Eucalyptus tetrodonta* woodland, unusual to be seen on the coast this far south (but common inland as far as Georgetown and Croydon). No Cookies were sighted - perhaps a "Search and Rescue" type sweep through the centre of the area may

be successful but would require multiple personnel and radio control. This would be a perfect training exercise for Cooktown SES...



Dendrophthoe - an attractive mistletoe which is very popular with nectar-feeding birds.

Further along the access road the vegetation changed to open forest with *Acacia* and *Melaleuca* species dominating. Here there were many calls of "orchid" from eagle-eyed Chris and Chris. These were the Tea Tree orchid *Dendrobium canaliculatum*, with nascent flower spikes making them easier to spot. This is one of the few orchid species collected by Banks and Solander in this vicinity in 1770.



Passiflora aurantia, whose flowers change from white to deep pink over their short lifespan.

We drove out past the airport for a bonus for the botanists, a sighting of the rare palm *Livistona concinna*, the Cooktown Palm, which only occurs in the Cooktown and Laura vicinities. A tall, majestic cabbage-type palm,

L. concinna's drooping leaflets contrasted strongly with a nearby *Livistona muelleri*'s stiffly upright fronds. *L. concinna* was known as *Livistona* sp. Cooktown until it was named following observations by Tony Irvine, a revered member of Tablelands SGAP.

The final activity for Sunday afternoon was a visit to Keating's Lagoon, a natural overflow of Meldrum Creek and a place of waterlilies, mangroves and waterbirds. On the south side of town and the way home for many, Keatings was a time of farewell and fond memories of friendships made or renewed. Until next year...

SPECIES LIST

Ferns

PTERIDACEAE

Lygodium reticulatum Climbing Maidenhair

PTERIDACEAE

Cheilanthes

Conifers and Cycads

CYCADACEAE



Cycas media Cycad

Flowering plants - Primitive

LAURACEAE

Cassytha filiformis Dodder Laurel
Endiandra glauca
Litsea glutinosa

Flowering plants - Monocots

AMARYLLIDACEAE

Crinum pedunculatum Mangrove Lily

ARECACEAE

Livistona concinna Cooktown Fan Palm
Livistona muelleri Cairns Fan Palm
Ptychosperma elegans

ASPARAGACEAE

Eustrephus latifolius



Lomandra multiflora

COLCHICACEAE

Schelhammera multiflora

CYPERACEAE

Cyperus javanicus

FLAGELLARIACEAE

Flagellaria indica Supplejack

ORCHIDACEAE

Dendrobium cf. bigibbum Cooktown Orchid
Dendrobium cf. canaliculatum Tea-tree Orchid

Geodorum densiflorum

POACEAE

Ectrosia leporina
Eriachne stipacea
Heteropogon triticeus Giant Spear Grass
**Melinis repens* Red Natal Grass
Mnesithea rottboelioides
Oplismenus
**Themeda quadrivalvis* Grader Grass
Themeda triandra Kangaroo Grass

XYRIDACEAE

Xyris

Flowering plants - Eudicots

ACANTHACEAE

Brunoniella acaulis
Nelsonia campsestris
Pseuderanthemum variabil Pastelflower
Rostellularia adscendens

ANACARDIACEAE

Buchanania arborescens

APOCYNACEAE

Alstonia actinophylla
Alyxia spicata
Dischidia nummularia Button Orchid
Gymnanthera oblonga Harpoon Bud
Ichnocarpus frutescens
Parsonsia velutina

ARALIACEAE

Schefflera actinophylla Umbrella Tree

ASTERACEAE

**Ageratum conyzoides* Bluetop
Centipeda
Elephantopus mollis
**Praxelis clematidea* Praxelis
**Synedrella nodiflora*

BIGNONIACEAE

Pandorea pandorana Wonga Vine

BURSERACEAE

Canarium australianum

CANNABACEAE

Trema tomentosa

CAPPARACEAE

Capparis lasiantha

CHRYSOBALANACEAE

Parinari nonda Nonda Plum

COMBRETACEAE

Terminalia microcarpa Sovereignwood
Dillenia alata Red Beech
Macaranga tanarius Macaranga
Mallotus philippensis
Mallotus polyadenos
Abrus precatorius Crab's Eye
Acacia auriculiformis
Acacia crassicarpa

Acacia flavescens
Acacia holosericea



Acacia leptocarpa

Acacia polystachya
**Crotalaria goreensis*
Cynometra iripa
Derris trifoliata
Erythrophleum chlorostachys Cooktown
Ironwood
Flemingia parviflora
Indigofera pratensis
Jacksonia thesioides
**Leucaena leucocephala* Leucaena
**Macroptilium atropurpureum* Siratro
**Mimosa pudica*
Pongamia pinnata Pongamia
**Senna siamea*
Sesbania cannabina var. *cannabina*
**Stylosanthes hamata*
**Stylosanthes scabra*
Tephrosia juncea
Zornia muriculata

LAMIACEAE

Clerodendrum
**Mesosphaerum suaveolens* Hyptis
Premna serratifolia
Vitex cf. *helogiton*

LECYTHIDIACEAE

Planchonia careya

LINDERNIACEAE

Buchnera linearis
Buchnera tetragona
Lindernia

LORANTHACEAE

Dendrophthoe

LYTHRACEAE

Sonneratia

MALVACEAE

Grewia cf. *retusifolia* Dogs Balls
Helicteres cf. sp. Normanby River (J.R. Clarkson+ 7967)
Heritiera littoralis Looking Glass
Mangrove
Hibiscus tiliaceus Cottonwood
**Sida cordifolia*

MENISPERMACEAE

Tinospora smilacina

MORACEAE

Ficus opposita Sandpaper Fig

MYRTACEAE

Corymbia clarksoniana
Corymbia tessellaris Moreton Bay Ash
Eucalyptus brassiana
Eucalyptus cullenii Cullen's Ironbark
Eucalyptus leptophleba Molloy Box
Eucalyptus platyphylla
Lophostemon grandiflorus subsp. *riparius*
Lophostemon suaveolens
Melaleuca leucadendra Weeping Paperbark



Melaleuca nervosa

Melaleuca viridiflora Broad-leaved Paperbark

OLEACEAE

Chionanthus ramiflora Northern Olive

PASSIFLORACEAE

Passiflora aurantia
 **Passiflora foetida* Stinking Passionfruit

PHYLLANTHACEAE

Antidesma ghaesembila
Breynia cernua
Bridelia tomentosa
Cleistanthus apodus

PICRODENDRACEAE

Petalostigma banksii Quinine
Petalostigma pubescens Quinine

PITTOSPORACEAE

Pittosporum ferrugineum

PLANTAGINACEAE

**Scoparia dulcis*

PROTEACEAE

Grevillea mimosoides
Grevillea parallela
Grevillea pteridifolia Fern-leaved Grevillea
Persoonia falcata Geebung
Xylomelum scottianum

RHAMNACEAE

Rhamnella vitiensis

RHIZOPHORACEAE

Bruguiera gymnorhiza Orange Mangrove
Carallia brachiata

RUBIACEAE

Aidia racemosa
Atractocarpus sessilis
Coelospermum decipiens
Coelospermum reticulatum Medicine Bush
Ixora timorensis
 **Mitracarpus hirtus*
Nauclea orientalis Leichhardt Tree
Pavetta australiensis
Tarenna dallachiana

SAPINDACEAE

Dodonaea polyandra
Guioa acutifolia
Jagera pseudorhus

SAPOTACEAE



Pouteria chartacea

SIMAROUBACEAE

Brucea javanica

SOLANACEAE

**Solanum torvum*

STEMONACEAE

Stemona lucida

SUIDAE

**Sus scrofa* Pig

VERBENACEAE

**Lantana camara* Lantana
 **Stachytarpheta jamaicensis* Snakeweed

VIOLACEAE

Afrohybanthus enneaspermus Purple Spadeflower



Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) - 2019 Conference

Blooming Biodiversity

Albany, Western Australia - 29th September to 4 October 2019.

The organizing committee is planning for 300 people, and so far over 250 registrations have been received. Bookings will be accepted till they reach capacity or till the 20 September 2019.

The tours still accepting bookings are:

Tour 1 Kwongan and Woodlands - post conference tour (pre-conf is full)

Tour 2 Granites and Lowlands both pre and post still have places available

Tour 3 Heath and Barrens has places on the pre-conference tour (post-conf is full)

Tour 4 Coasts and Forests has places on the post-conference tour (pre-conf is full)

Tours have now been opened up for people not attending the Conference.

Finally people interested in attending the 2019 ANPSA Conference can visit the website www.bloomingbiodiversity.com.au to book and for more details.

MYSTERY STYPHELIA UPDATE

Last month's newsletter (No. 192) reported on an attractive little *Styphelia* found by Townsville NPQ in the White Mountains. After close examination, the Australian Tropical Herbarium now conclude the species is *Styphelia mitchellii* (formerly *Leucopogon mitchellii*), a well known and widespread species.

WHAT'S HAPPENING...

Cairns Branch

Sunday 18 August 2019. Russell Heads excursion. Boat trip down the Russell River to Russell Heads. Orchid spotting and beach rainforest in a beautiful, mountain-framed setting.

Meet at the Bellenden Ker boat ramp (at the end of Russell River Road, Bellenden Ker. Turn east

just north of the Bellenden Ker cafe - see map below) at around 9.30 am and we should return by 2:30 to accommodate the tide.

People will need hat sunscreen, chance of bites so some repellent, lunch. Tea coffee and water available from the hut. Bring lunch.

Would be good to have numbers of takers before Friday if possible to work out our boats. RSVP to secretary@sgapcairns.org.au

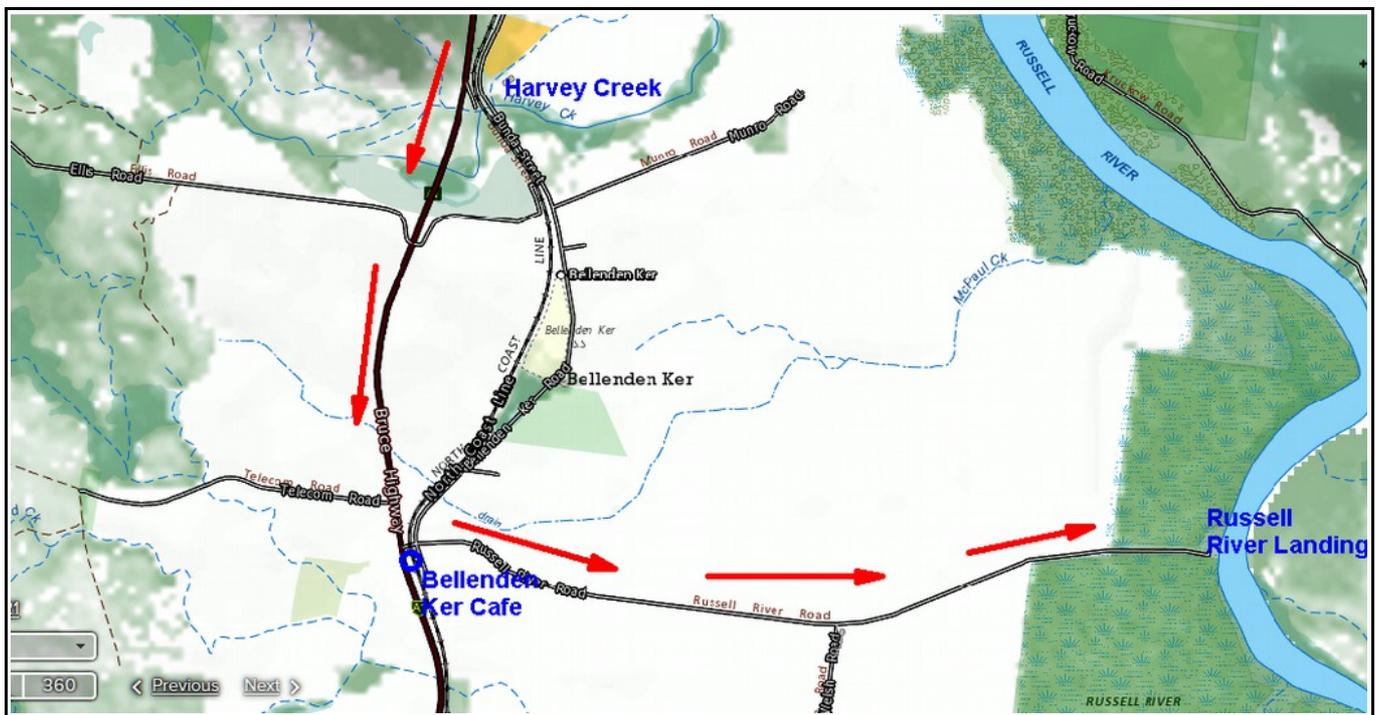
Townsville Branch

Meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7pm, Annandale Community Centre. Excursions the following Sunday. Website: www.npqtownsville.org.au

Tablelands Branch

Meetings on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm, Tolga CWA Hall. Excursions the following Sunday.

Excursion officers: Bert and Chris Jaminon, 40914565.



Society for Growing Australian Plants, Inc.
Cairns Branch.

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