

Society for Growing Australian Plants Cairns Branch

NEWSLETTER

October 2019

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Excursion report September 2019

A DIFFERENT SORT OF SGAP DAY

Don Lawie

As did the Visigoths descend on ancient Rome, so did Cairns SGAP appear at the doors of Casa Gandini [*Editor's Note: In our case there was less burning and pillaging*] – perhaps for the last time. Over many years the home that David and Mary built on a hill overlooking Cairns and its harbour has been the venue for many social and educational get-togethers.

The yard became home to an array of rare and wonderful Wet Tropics trees and shrubs and a

large hill block was re-vegetated to its original rainforest canopy. Dave added a large Fern House and an orchid refuge, both with just the right amounts of light and shade and a tailor-made watering system. A wonderful grandchildren's play ground came next, then, true to his roots in the Italian way, Dave's kitchen garden produced a plethora of fruit and vegetables.

Fast forward to the present: Dave and Mary are no longer the middle aged power houses that drove the property to its near perfection; maintenance has become a chore and Mary (who conquered the Kokoda Trail and climbed PNG's Mt Wilhelm) has had a series of health problems culminating in a massive stroke. Mary is severely incapacitated and Dave's days are spent in caring for her.

The reluctant decision has been made to downsize, the house has been put on the market, and the real estate agent advertises that the best thing about it "is the view".

Something had to be done. Cairns SGAP's normal meeting day became a renovation rescue day and we set to with a will. About a dozen of us arrived, including two of Mary's colleagues from the

Australian Tropical Herbarium. These - Mark and Darren - tackled the hardest physical jobs and contributed heavily to the overall success of the day.

Karl Marx pontificated "from each according to his abilities" and that was the tone that was set for the day. Stuart sorted the ornamental pool, removed weeds and rejuvenated the rare plants therein. Pauline's orchid knowledge facilitated her Solomonic decisions as to the fate of the remaining orchids with some far gone plants going to the Lazarus Corner to await a resurrectional miracle. Val and Graeme supplied a nonstop supply of delicacies for morning and afternoon tea and lunch, and the rest of us worked through a long list of achievements - emptying and cleaning pots, removing dead plants, rehabilitating the fern house walkways and dealing with anything that seemed appropriate. There was a tangible atmosphere of goodwill that emanates from Friends helping Friends and I am sure that the next real estate person will present the place in a better light. We all wish for an eventual rehabilitation for Mary and a lightening of Dave's load of care.

Postscript...

David Gandini has sent through a message asking if SGAP wanted any of Mary's botany books. Val and Sandy kindly picked up the books and they are now in Sandy's garage. Sandy advises:

- There are a lot of books!
- Sandy suggests we review the books in the SGAP library and top up with Mary's books.
- The remaining books could be allocated to interested members. If more than one member is interested in a book, we could pull names out of a hat or flip a coin. Any books left over go to a thrift shop.
- Contact Sandy Perkins for more details.

BEAUTIFUL PLANTS OF THE WET TROPICS

Syzygium erythrocalyx

Syzygium is the largest genus of woody flowering plants in the world. There may be between 1 200 and 1 800 species in the genus, whose distribution extends from subtropical Africa to the Pacific Islands. There are 78 species recorded for Australia, with roughly 2/3 of these occurring in the Wet Tropics.

One of the more attractive members of the genus is *Syzygium erythrocalyx*. A small tree, it has lush foliage of attractively veined leaves. New growth is a spectacular pink-purple. Flowers are large, with red sepals (the species name *erythrocalyx* means red sepals) that develop into large, multi-seeded red fruits.

Don Lawie reports that his "little tree may be about twenty years old; I think it may have come from a Friends of the Garden Father's Day sale. I moved it twice - [the first location had] too much sun for the big leaves, then [the second location had] not enough light, and now it seems fairly happy. It flowered a few years ago but we were away and it didn't set fruit."



Syzygium erythrocalyx cultivated by Don Lawie.

The desert in flower

Images by Tony Roberts

Tony Roberts recently returned from a month in the desert and other arid places. Due to rain earlier in the year, there were a lot of plants flowering. Here are some pictures he took along the way.



Abutilon



Pynosorus (yellow) and Frankenia (pink)



Xanthorrhoea



Senna



Daisy



Eremophila



Frankenia



Spyridium



Arthropodium



Senna

WHAT'S HAPPENING...

Cairns Branch

12 noon, Sunday 20 October
2019

Smithy Holmes Park, Behana
Creek, Aloomba.

To get there, travel south from
Cairns along the Bruce Highway.

Cross the Mulgrave River just
past Gordonvale, continue about
one kilometre, then take a left
turn onto Anderson Road. Follow
Anderson Road through to
Aloomba, cross the railway line
then take a sharp right turn on
to Broughton Road. This will take
you directly to Behana Creek.
Cross Behana Creek and meet at
Smithy Holmes Park.

Townsville Branch

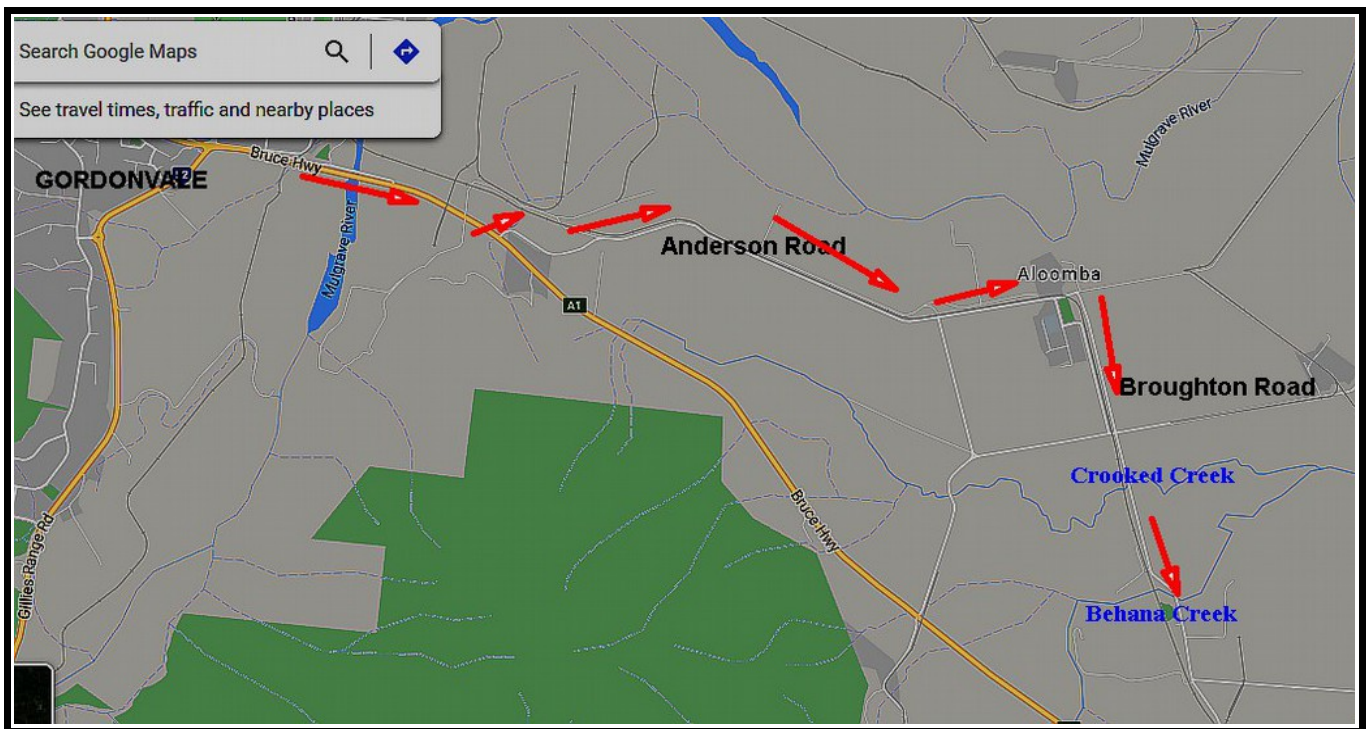
Meetings on the 2nd

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.**

www.sgapcairns.org.au

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President: Tony Roberts

Vice President: Pauline Lawie

Secretary: Sandy Perkins (secretary@sgapcairns.org.au)

Treasurer: Val Carnie

Newsletter: Stuart Worboys (worboys1968@yahoo.com.au)

Webmaster: Tony Roberts