



# Society for Growing Australian Plants

Cairns Branch Inc.

Newsletter 220, May 2022

## Contents

WET SEASON WANDER AT TOWNSVILLE'S CAPE CLEVELAND.....	1
CAIRNS BRANCH NEWS.....	4
Membership reminder from Val.....	4
Cairns Show, 2022.....	4
REQUEST FOR PHOTOS OF TROPICAL GARDENS.....	4
ANSPA BIENNIAL CONFERENCE.....	4
WHAT'S HAPPENING?.....	5
Cairns.....	5
Townsville.....	5
Tablelands.....	5

## Wet season wander at Townsville's Cape Cleveland

**Stuart Worboys**

I've rarely had the opportunity to explore the Townsville region in the wet season, so with a short stopover in "Mt Isa-by-the-sea" planned for mid-February I touched base with NPO Townsville Branch to discuss possibilities. Ian Dyer, long term member and enthusiastic off-track bushwalker, kindly offered to accompany me on a bush bash. A COVID scare in his household almost scotched those plans (as they have for so many people over the last two years), but Sunday 15th February dawned on a more-or-less healthy home, and he was able to escape the potential lockdown.

The first goal was Cape Cleveland. This rugged granitic headland juts out into the Coral Sea 20 km east of Townsville, and is home the renowned Australian Institute of Marine Sciences. A jumble of steep ridges and hills bear a mixture of

woodlands, grasslands, rainforest, mangroves and saltmarsh. Ian and I struck out from the road and immediately encountered thick tall luxurious guinea grass (*Megathyrsus maximus*). To avoid this, we struggled uphill in the wet season heat and humidity to where thinner, poorer soils were less favourable to this invasive cattle food plant, and the shorter grass made for easier progress.



*Ipomoea abrupta*

We followed the hillside northward, inching our way up through clumps of beautiful native pea shrubs (*Tephrosia astragaloides*), and over



alarmingly steep granite slopes that were home to pockets of vine thicket protected by spreading banyans (*Ficus virens*), glamorous flowering vines (*Canavalia papuana*, *Ipomoea abrupta*), some not-so-glamorous vines (*Alyxia spicata*), *Pandanus cookii*, and the always spectacular hoop pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*). An unfortunate find was Siam weed (*Chromolaena odorata*), not previously recorded on the Cape, but now well established elsewhere in the Townsville region, and likely to find its way into these remote, unmonitored areas.



*Tephrosia astragaloides* - this white variety was dominant

The slopes we were traversing tracked northwards, and allowed us spectacular views across the valley to 500 m high bouldery mountains, and south east to the Coral Sea. We could watch rain squalls approach across the grey sea, but when they arrived to trouble us we were already sweaty enough that the extra moisture made no difference.

Ian led the way into a group of massive granite boulders, some of which provided sheltered overhangs. Here he pointed out little-known

Aboriginal artworks (possibly shield designs?) - a magical find that made the day quite special.



Our path was interrupted by a steeply-incised gully. From above, the dark green unbroken canopy below indicated an extensive rainforest. We slipped and tripped our way down into the gully to find a beautiful tall closed forest dominated by hoop pines. We reached a small creek tumbling over huge fern-covered (*Asplenium australasicum*) boulders, then followed its path downhill, negotiating tree falls, waterfalls, vine tangles and more steep rocky slopes, and eventually found our way its junction with the main drainage line which wound its way southward, shaded by *Ficus hispida*, *Mallotus claoxyloides* and *Eucalyptus tereticornis*. We followed the creek a way, eventually realising it was going to be far more comfortable to remove our boots and walk along the shallow, sandy creek bed.

The final 300 m of the walk was probably the toughest. After determining the creek was leading us in the wrong direction, we put back on our shoes and headed cross country back to the road.



But once again, tall thick guinea grass slowed our progress, and we arrived back at the cars well and truly out of breath.



Views of the Coral Sea and Cape Cleveland on a grey, squally day.

The next target for the day was the mangrove, *Aegiatilis annulata*. We'd received a request from Glenn Leiper for photographs to be included in the next edition of "Mangroves to Mountains". We scouted some of the tidal channels feeding into Cocoa Creek and Crocodile Creek, but were unsuccessful. To finish things off, we drove to the

base of Mt Storth, and wandered up the road to the Clevedon Telephone Exchange. Amongst the rocks was more rock art showing the same geometric patterns and possible shield designs we'd seen earlier in the day. At the top, we encountered more great views and a clump of *Xanthorrhoea* that seemed distinctly different to the usual *X. johnsonii*. Our explorations complete, I thanked Ian and we headed home, wet but with an improved appreciation of Townsville's diversity.



Ian Dyer (Townsville NPQ) in the rainforest gully at Cape Cleveland.



# Cairns Branch News

## Membership reminder from Val

As per our constitution, a member shall be a person paying a full subscription. A member must be a member of SGAP Qld Region (paid direct )and Cairns Branch SGAP. Renewal date is April 1st

Our Branch fees remain at \$10 per person/family and can be paid online Westpac Community Solutions

BSB: 034 167

Account: 850 790

Account Name: Society for Growing Australian Plants Cairns Branch.

## Cairns Show, 2022

Val has been to the Cairns Show Office to arrange our Minor Sponsorship for this year's Cairns Show. It has been amended to a \$30 Special Prize for Australian Natives, and will be awarded to the exhibitor who gains the most points in Classes 22117 to 22122. The prize money has been paid to the Show organisers.

## Request for photos of tropical gardens

### Lawrence Smith AM

Lawrie Smith is a Brisbane-based landscape architect, and study group leader of Australian Native Plant Society's (ANPSA) Garden Design Study Group (GDSG). He writes:

"I have decided to 'bite the bullet' and go to the ANPSA Conference in Kiama in September. As a result I have been asked to present a lecture on the theme of 'Native gardens - past, present and future' – quite a task!! I want to ensure that all of the various regional garden characters around the continent are covered in my presentation, and in preparing the lecture I find that I have very few

quality tropical garden photos that demonstrate good/appropriate design. Perhaps not surprisingly, there are many photos in GDSG records of temperate gardens south of the border, however I want to also boast what we do in the north that is so unique and different!!!

Just hoping that you might be able to put the call out to Cairns and Tablelands members who have such gardens to ask them to take some photos of their garden for me?"

Photos are needed by 31 July. Lawrie can be contacted at [lawries@live.com](mailto:lawries@live.com)

## ANPSA Biennial Conference

Registrations are now open for the 2022 ANPSA Biennial Conference.

**Australian flora - past present future**

**Saturday, 10 September to Friday 16 September**

**Kiama**



Inspirational speakers program - taking us on a journey to the past, present and future

We are delighted to announce our starting roundup of speakers. They will bring life to our theme of Australian flora - past present future.

**Costa Georgiadis**, lover of nature, landscape architect, permaculturist teacher, and the well known host of Gardening Australia, will share his insights into the future of Australian native plants. Costa has a gift for engaging people of all ages to connect with nature.

**Professor David Keith**, a leading botanist and ecologist working in the areas of vegetation dynamics, population and ecosystem modelling and fire ecology, will open the conference and provide an overview of the past present and future of Australian native plants.

**Professor David Lindenmayer** is a world-leading expert in forest ecology, conservation science, and biodiversity conservation. He will share his research into Fire, forests, plantations and biodiversity, a critical challenge for all Australians who care about the country on which we live.

**Clarence Slockee**, a Cudgenburra/Bundjalung Aboriginal man from the lush Tweed Valley and also a long time Gardening Australia presenter, will bring to life the world of the First Nations people, how they lived and nurtured the land for thousands of years.

And many more speakers to come! More information here:

<https://www.austplants.com.au/Conference-program-and-speakers>

Register here:

<https://events.humanitix.com/2022kiama>

More information here:

<https://www.austplants.com.au/ANPSA-Biennial-Conference-2022>

Extend your stay with Add-on tours Take time to enjoy some of the beautiful regions of NSW with fellow native plant enthusiasts. Videos of the tours are available on our YouTube

Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/AustralianPlantsSocietyNSW>

## What's Happening?

### Cairns

**15 May 2022.** Explore Redden Island and the Machans Beach foreshore. Meet at Keith Edrick Park, Marshall Street, Machans Beach at midday. After our usual meeting, we will check out Redden Island and then go back to the northern end of

Machans and check out the mangroves at the mouth of Barr Creek near the new bridge. At the same time we'll check some new plantings as well as some other dune vegetation.

**19 June 2022.** Fig Tree Wetlands joint excursion with Mulgrave Landcare. Lisa O'Mara will meet us opposite Fishery Falls Hotel at **11:45**, for a **midday** departure to the Wetlands. Lunch will be at the Wetlands (Mulgrave Landcare will supply a marquee, but BYO chairs, lunch, and mosquito repellent). Walking around the site is likely to be muddy, so make sure you have appropriate footwear. Four wheel drive is not needed, however we'll carpool for the trip from Fishery Falls to the Wetlands.

Fishery Falls is located on the Bruce Highway, 40 km south of Cairns or 16 km south of the Gillies Highway turn-off at Gordonvale.

### Townsville

NPO Townsville normally meets at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month, February to November. The meeting venue is the Oonoonba Community Hall, Shannon Street, Oonoonba.

### Tablelands

SGAP Tablelands Branch holds its meetings on the fourth Wednesday of the month at the C.W.A. Hall, Tolga, commencing 7.30.

**29 May 2022** Lunch and MEGA RAFFLE. Peter and Renee's place, 1 Shaban Drive, Mareeba. Bring yummy food to share, food utensils, drinks. Don't forget to bring plants for the giant raffle. Please label your plants. If you do not know the name, bring labels and someone should be able to identify them.

#### SGAP Cairns Branch 2022-2023 Committee

**President:** Patsy Penny

**Vice President:** Dr Rob Jago

**Secretary:** Helen Lawie  
([secretary@sgapcairns.org.au](mailto:secretary@sgapcairns.org.au))

**Treasurer:** Val Carnie

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