



Society for Growing Australian Plants

Cairns Branch Inc.

Newsletter 224, September 2022

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August Excursion - Smithfield Conservation Park

Helen Lawie

The location of our August outing was Smithfield Conservation Park, accessed via James Cook University's Nguma-bada (Smithfield) campus. Before we entered the rainforest, we first appreciated the plantings on campus. *Tecomanthe dendrophila* was trained over shade giving trellises on one of the buildings. *Tecomanthe* can also be seen trellised and providing shade at the DFO shopping centre. It's clutches of pendulous magenta flowers herald the advent of Father's Day and create magical bowers of blooms when seen in nature.



Walking and Mountain Bike tracks are shared in the Park and maintained by the Cairns Mountain Bike Club. While mostly shady, the tracks allow ample sunlight and so a mixture of saplings and fully grown trees are visible together. This provided an ideal classroom for our plant identification enthusiasts to team up and offer ID's, without the tutelage of our usual botanists. Considering we had a number of graduates of the Rainforest Plant Identification Course (next one in November), we acquitted ourselves adequately, if not in outcomes, certainly in endeavor.

Balanophora fungosa was out in force, showing various states of early development, flower, and decay. For those of us who couldn't remember it from last Winter, Don explained how it parasitises

tree roots, and invited us to look closer. We observed the female flower as the main brown knob, surrounded by a circlet of white male flowers. New member Leesa shared a tech tip on how to add a caption to a photo on an iPhone. So

we all asked Don to spell *Balanophora* several times over and got very excited noting it into our phones.



The peculiar inflorescences of Balanophora fungosa, a parasitic flowering plant. A ring of male flowers surround a dome of tiny female flowers, with non-photosynthetic leaves (bracts) at the base.

Tree of the day must be *Myristica globosa* Native Nutmeg, and we benefitted from having fallen fruit, saplings, and large fruiting trees all in evidence along the path. As sometimes happens, once we absorbed the info, we suddenly started spotting them everywhere. We were surrounded! Would we be able to identify them next time without the benefit of the fruit? Check for lateral branching characteristic, leaf shape, and don't worry: they'll be fruiting till around November.

Runner up for Tree of the Day, would have to go to *Dysoxylum pettigrewianum* Spur Mahogany, a large buttressing tree with brown fruit. We could barely see the crown and leaves, but by the solid trunk, subtle buttresses, and distinctive bark pattern we felt confident in the ID. It dominated the category of thick trunked trees leaving us to wonder about the logging history of the Park. The occasional large eucalyptus emerged on the dryer, sparser ridge to the left of the track before we descended to a creek. One showed a damaged crown now recovered, but still sporting dead partially amputated branches. For reference the Smithfield Conservation Park was gazetted in 2000, but I'm not sure what its land use was prior to this [Editor's note: I suspect it was selectively logged. There are a couple of points at the base of the hill where stone has been quarried.]. Generally

speaking of the region, logging was phased out by World Heritage declaration in 1988. And Cyclone Yasi was 2011.

We also observed Rose *Butternut* *Blepharocarya involucrigera* (not just an upland tree), vines like climbing fern *Lygodium*, and Fire Vine *Tetracera nordtiana*, a tricky *Diploglottis* species perhaps Boonjie Tamarind, and some other species that were pleasantly frustrating.

For those interested in visiting this accessible rainforest, you may wish to bear in mind the dates of international mountain bike competition Crankworkx. For anyone else who was curious about the big piles of red dirt: Super Saturday 8th October is double header day with the Pump Track and Slopestyle events on.

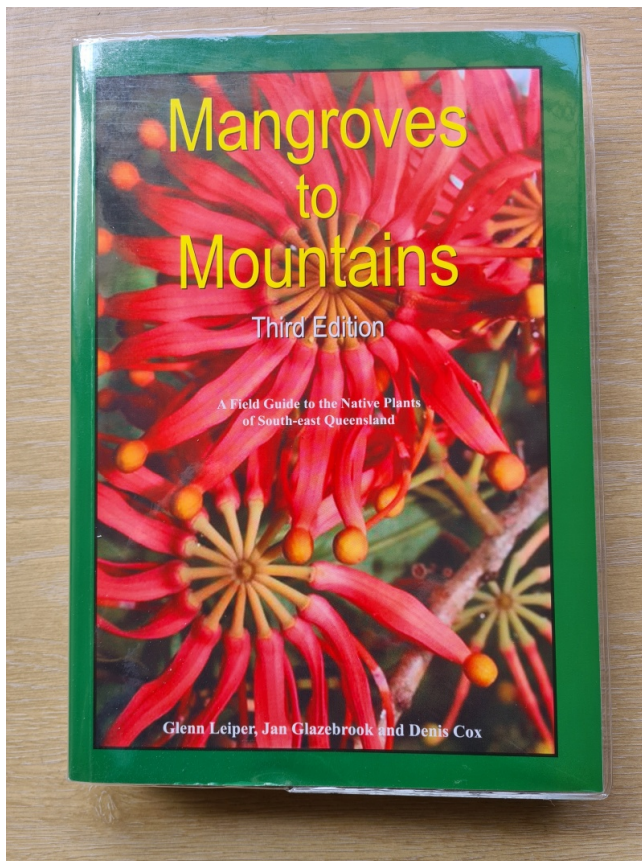
Tips for collecting seed

Helen Lawie

Last month in Tolga we saw the clever way Garry Sankowky used a fine mesh produce bag to catch seed from a dehiscing fruit. Pauline has purchased some of these reusable bags and found a new use: protecting fresh and ripening homegrown strawberries from the ravages of fruit fly.



Mangrove to Mountains - **New** 3rd Edition



Probably Queensland's most well-known plant guide, "Mangroves to Mountains" is now in its 3rd edition. Compiled by Glenn Leiper, Jan Glazebrook and Denis Cox, this is the definitive field guide to the native plants of south east Queensland.

The new edition has lots of minor changes that include botanical name updates, lots of new photos to replace former ones, some updated plant descriptions, a handful of additional species, and trying to keep an eye on details that will help differentiate species but that's always a challenge.

The book has gone up in price like everything, with a rise of \$5 to \$55 plus another \$10 for postage, making it \$65 posted. Contact Glenn Leiper directly on galeiper@gmail.com.



Tree planting
Almaden

Wednesday, 28 September

...you never forgotten will be while your grave marks the spot by that white blossomed tree...

So reads the headstone of Nellie Ryan, resident of Georgetown, buried in Almaden 1904. Sadly dying while passing through Almaden without her family, Nellie's funeral was attended by the entire town. Can you imagine? The whole town showed their care for this young woman they didn't even know.

If you've ever been to the Almaden cemetery, you may realise that there aren't any trees with white flowers there. Does this mean that young Nellie has been forgotten? What sort of tree might it have been?

To keep the memory of Nellie alive, and celebrate the hospitality of the outback, a new little tree will be planted in the Almaden Cemetery. There are also trees for the the Railway Station, Tamarind Gardens Caravan Park in the old school grounds, and at the Railway Hotel.

There will be some special guests to help plant the trees: Cr Angela Toppin, Mareeba Shire Mayor; Wil Kemp, driver of the Savannahlander train and distant relatives of Nellie Ryan. And, hopefully, you!

From 2pm Almaden Cemetery on 28 Sept 2022

Buy Your Own refreshments available at the Railway Hotel afterwards.

All welcome

2023 Yabba

Former Cairns SGAP member, Sharren Wong, is now happily settled in Reedy Creek on the Gold Coast, just inland from Burleigh Heads. You may remember she took the lead in organising the ill-fated 2020 Yabba. She writes:

I am involved in the NPQ Gold Coast group... I was wondering if the Cairns SGAP group are going to be running with the YABBA in 2023? It is being bandied about at the moment and I thought I would pose the question of whether it is going ahead? If it is on the cards I am more than happy to pass on any planning documents I had collected or made for the aborted Yabba we were working on... I just wanted to touch base and let you know I am happy to help out with anything I may have notes on.

Is there an interest in the Branch of hosting the Yabba?

What's Happening?

Cairns

18 September 2022. Russell Heads. All members are welcome. Some members may wish to participate in more energetic activities, others may wish to relax by the beach. BYO Chair!

We will travel to Russell Heads by boat. The wharf is located at the eastern end of Russell River Road, which turns off the Bruce Highway at Bellenden Ker, just south of Harvey Creek. The boat will depart from the wharf at at 9.30, and return around 16.30. Bring lunch, mozzie repellent, sun protection, and \$5 cash to cover the boat's fuel.

28 September 2022. Tree planting, Almaden. See flyer above for more details.

Townsville

NPQ 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. Excursions occur on the following Sunday. Contact: Peter Radke pandaradke@gmail.com

SGAP Cairns Branch 2022-2023 Committee

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