



Native Plants Queensland

Cairns Branch

♦
July 2026

June Highlights

Notice something different?

As of 1 July 2026 we are *Native Plants Queensland, Cairns Branch*! Aligning our identity with the state organisation and other branches.

Excursion to Irvinebank, Sunday 21 June

Stuart Worboys

In all the fuss about the botanical wonderland that is north's rainforests and vine thickets, it can be forgotten that the nearby dry country offers a colourful and accessible flora that deserves attention. The coastal mountains of the Wet Tropics capture the rain-bearing clouds as they float west from the Coral Sea, squeezing out most of their water and leaving just a fraction to fall on the lands beyond. You can see the affect of this in the Bureau of Meteorology's rainfall data. If you follow a (more or less) straight line inland from Babinda, this is what you find:

- Babinda's average annual rainfall is 4290 mm;
- Malanda's is 1706 mm;
- Herberton, despite sitting at an elevation of 963 m, receives just 859 mm on average;
- Finally we reach the old mining village Irvinebank, sitting at 763 m on the western side of the Great Dividing Range, which receives an average annual rainfall of 883 mm.

You can see this rainfall pattern up and down the western side of the Wet Tropics region.

Next Excursion

Cooktown
17 - 19 July
Refer to page 4 for details
rsvp:
secretary@sgapcairns.org.au

Don't forget to pay your branch AND regional fees so you can participate in excursions.

Upcoming Excursions

August: Harvey Creek
September: Daintree
October: Cattana Wetlands
November: Mason St
December: Christmas party,
Edge Hill Bowls Club

SGAP Library

Explore items available
for loan [here](#).

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This region, called the Einasleigh uplands supports weird and beautiful flora. It shares many characteristics with the heathlands and woodlands of southern Australia – relatively low rainfall, poor soils, adaptations to fire, with peas, wattles daisies, myrtles, grasses and Proteaceae common in the lower layer, and eucalypts the dominant tree. It's the colourful shrub and ground plants that first caught Peter Radke's attention many years ago. He's led expedition through this region for decades, and after a loooong absence from the area, Cairns Branch of Native Plants Queensland joined up with the Tablelands for a winter excursion.

We met at Herberton at 10 a.m. where showers threatened. After meeting and greeting the Tablelands crew, trip leader Peter Radke gave a thorough briefing: where to go, what we might find, and rough road hazards. And so we set off, first stop the Powerlink powerline track, located just east of the Baal Gammon mine. Here, a rough 4WD drive track winds over hills and gullies, offering



Acacia holosericea



Pandorea linearis

spectacular views as it climbs to over a thousand metres. To moderate the effects of bushfires Powerlink contractors regularly remove woody growth, creating a pasture of native grasses and odd subshrubs. Here we saw the beautiful purple pea, *Mirbelia speciosa*, yellow and white paper daisies (*Xerochrysum bracteatum* and *Coronidium newcastlianum*). Tall pink trigger plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*) were common amongst the kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) – it was a delight to introduce new members to the dramatic trigger mechanism that helps pollinate these pretty flowers. Low rigid shrubs of *Hakea benthamii* were flowering abundantly across the site, and the large yellow out-of-season flowers of the ground-hugging herb *Goodenia subsolana* were spotted in a couple of places. For the eagle-eyed, one of the region's rarest plants, *Micromyrtus delicata*, was spotted in abundance. This tiny subshrub, with tea-tree like flowers

just a couple of millimetres across is known only from a 2 km radius around this point. Sadly we observed the effects of the site's regular clearing – with each mowing event exotic grasses such as sabi grass (*Urochloa mosambicensis*) and grader grass (*Themeda quadrivalvis*) further into this habitat, displacing rare native species and promoting hot, frequent fires.

A couple more stops along the way led to some interesting finds. At the Stannary Hills Road intersection, the rare *Grevillea glossadenia* was found in flower. Further up, Peter had something special in store. At a non-descript stretch of road, Peter pulled over and we all piled out. Growing in the piles of grader-thrown gravel is a small uncharismatic wattle – Australia's only purple flowered *Acacia*. Although unique amongst the continent's wattles, there was a general consensus that this is Australia's least charismatic member of the genus. But the site was home to several other wattle species, some restricted to the hills around Irvinebank, Stannary Hills and Herberton. In a few minutes, we found *Acacia whitei*, *A. longipedunculata*, *A. galioides*, *A. leptoloba*, and *A. wickhamii*.



Jumna Dam

After a lunch under the figs at Irvinebank, we finished our excursion at Jumna Dam. Here we could gaze across the large body of water under the shade of yet another species endemic to these hills – *Corymbia rhodops*, the red-eyed bloodwood. This species produces large, wide open flowers with a deep red centre. The afternoon was progressing, and we coastal people had a 120 km ahead of us. After thanking Peter and the rest of the Tablelands crew, we headed back down the hill to the tropical lowlands.



Pumpkin Gum (*Eucalyptus pachycalyx*)

Cooktown 2026

July Joint Excursion - Tablelands and Cairns Branch Cooktown
Botanic Gardens Working Bee.

Details:

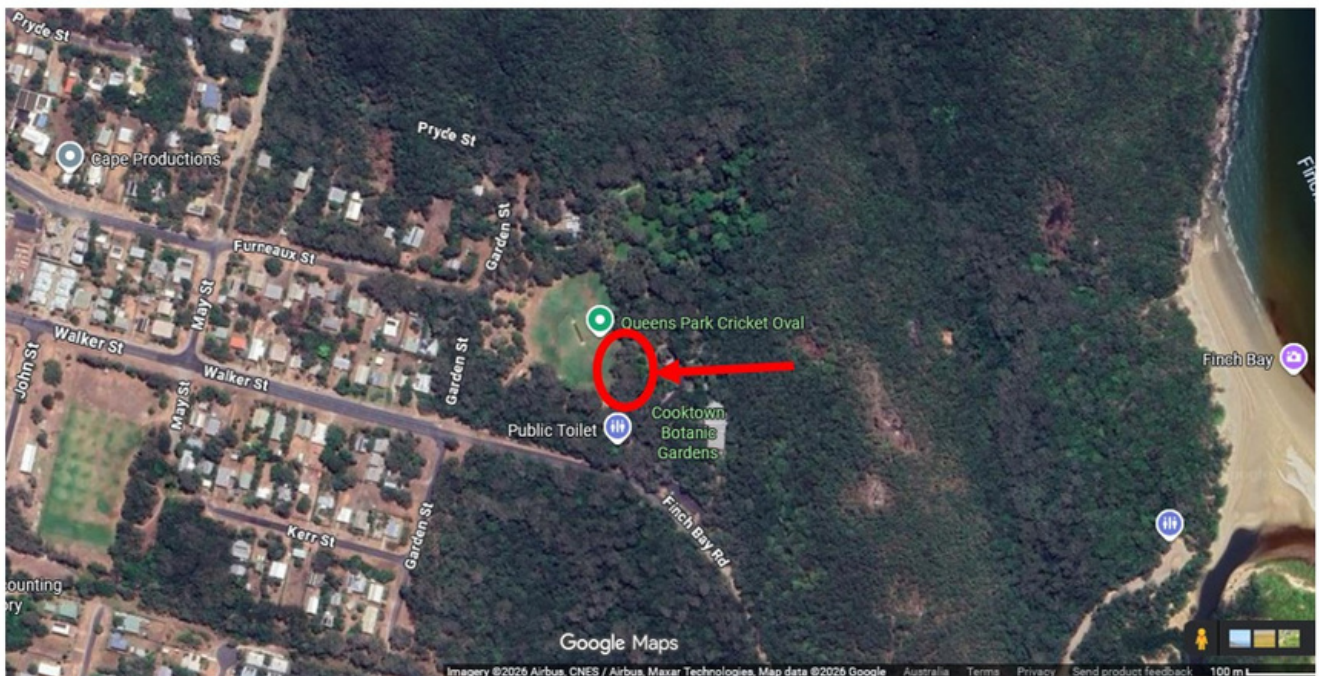
Friday 17 July – arrive Cooktown, set up camp (or your chosen motel). Settle in and make yourself comfortable.

Saturday 18 July – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Working bee in and around the gardens. Work plan to be discussed.

Sunday 19 July – Excursion. Destination to be advised by Nikko.

Please confirm your attendance by emailing secretary@sgapcairns.org.au before 10 July.

If you have any questions, contact Stuart Worboys on worboys1968@yahoo.com.au



Camping site at the botanic gardens

Pavetta australiensis

Pavetta - from Malabar, australiensis - from Australia
Family: Rubiaceae



©Graham Bell

About

Pavetta, with its beautiful, showy, perfumed flowers, is a perfect addition to any garden. Plus it attracts a variety of butterflies and their caterpillars that feed on the leaves.

A shrub 1-5 metres tall, can be pruned to retained a bushy appearance and used as a screening plant. It is quite hardy, once established and requires little water.

Fruit is a black berry, 5-6mm diameter.

Occurrence

Occurs in eastern Australia from Cape York down to northern NSW from sea level to 1000m.

Propagation

Propagate by cutting or fresh seed - no special pre-treatment required.



©Phoebe French



© Martin Bennett

In short

Shrub
1-5 m tall

Flowers: Sept - Nov

Fruit: Jan - Mar



Notes: Suitable for
any size garden

Further reading:

[ATRP](#)

[ALA](#)

[Some Magnetic
Island Plants](#)