



Society for Growing Australian Plants Cairns Branch

Newsletter 164

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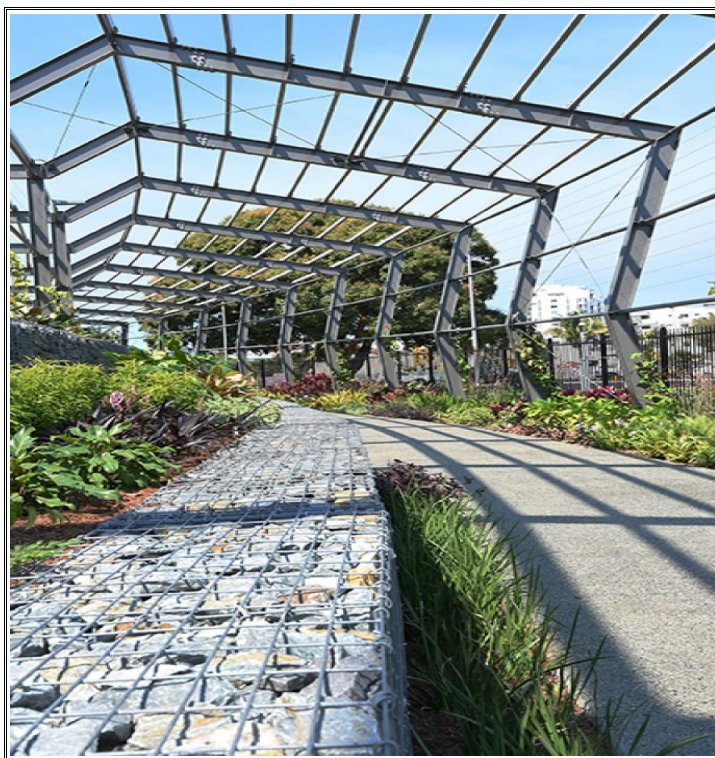
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EXCURSION REPORT

Munro Martin Park redevelopment, 21 September 2016

Text by Don Lawrie, photo by Cairns City Council

About thirty years ago Pauline and I regularly attended the wonderful productions of the Cairns Choral Society in the Cairns Civic Theatre opposite Munro-Martin Park. We would arrive early and set up table and chairs in the park and enjoy a sylvan dinner before the show. The park gradually became a refuge for the unfortunate people of our society and was a place to be avoided. Then, a few years ago, somebody in Cairns Regional Council had a lateral thinking brainwave and conceived the newly-opened Munro-Martin Parklands.

Cairns' SGAP outing for September was an inspection of this new facility. We welcomed new members/visitors Kay, Steve, Karen and Jack who joined us for lunch and chats as usual, to find that there are no picnic tables – it is not that sort of Park. We sat on the shady steps of the sound shell and admired the

new-laid grass sward and the spacious amphitheatre seating opposite. The main part of the sound shell/performance area is ingeniously constructed, not of concrete pylons but of simple wire, rock-filled gabions. This form of construction has been used throughout history as a basis for defensive forts utilising wicker baskets instead of high-tensile wire. The gabion walls of Sevastopol withstood the Anglo-French artillery for many months in 1855. Our Main Roads planners use gabions to stabilise the banks of the Gillies Highway, and our Council has filled the Parklands gabions with attractive blocks of dark grey Mount Formartine granite and greywacke (ref R.L.Jago) which will age most attractively.

Armed with a vine species list provided by Chairman Tony, we set off in an anticlockwise direction, finding a small toilet block in the northeast corner and an attractive avenue of established trees and palms interspersed with new plantings of native trees. An outstanding specimen was a flowering *Brachychiton velutinosus*, grafted onto a base of the locally occurring Flame Tree *Brachychiton acerifolium*. Dry country Brachychitons are not amenable to our Wet Tropics but this grafted

plant was already over three metres tall and flowering well. *Top Marks, Chaps!*

A feature of the Parklands is the number of vines that have been planted on horizontal wires attached to attractive curved metal posts. The species mix comprises a majority of flowering tropical exotics with a good representation of native vines, most of which are butterfly host plants. Many vines are already growing vigorously and some are in flower. Nectar eating birds will abound in a short time and attract some of the ornithologists who visit Cairns to admire the Esplanade marine birds.

Our members expressed concern at some of the vine species chosen. Plants such as *Thunbergia mysorensis* are undoubtedly extremely attractive but are an insidious, virtually unkillable weed, as also are *Congea*, *Petrea* and *Quisqualis* - all of which I inadvisably planted in our garden many years ago and which I am still trying to exterminate. Admittedly they can be contained and controlled in the Parklands but well meaning gardener lovers will take cuttings home to the 'burbs and off they will go. Rob pointed out that the grass in the more open north east corner is the native *Zoysia* which occurs on foreshores of Cairns northern beaches and is resistant to salt water.

A wide concrete pathway circles the Parklands (which occupy an entire city block) and on the western side it runs behind the tiered amphitheatre seating. Both sides of the path are planted with a very wide range of ground plants, again with a preponderance of exotic tropicals. Attractive foliage is a feature as well as flowers; I particularly liked several drifts of the pale flowering morph of the ground orchid *Spathoglottis plicata* which grows in parts of Cape York peninsula and Malesia. Orchids are not a major part of the plant mix but there are many large clumps of locally native Pencil Orchids (*Dendrobium teretifolium*) growing in the old mango trees (*Mangifera indica*) along the eastern boundary.

Some of the ground plantings have strong invasive weed potential and the gardeners will need to keep them under control – difficult in the case of some that Pauline refers to as “botanical thugs”. Rob expressed concern at a species of *Excoecaria* growing on the path edge. All plants in this genus have a caustic sap which could cause problems with young people brushing past them. “Blind-your-eyes” mangrove is the best known specimen of the genus *Excoecaria* – the name says it all.

One last criticism : there are numerous informative story boards around the perimeter and two of them declare that the Cairns Birdwing butterfly's host plant is the Dutchman's Pipe vine. This is half true: Dutchman's Pipe is included in the *Aristolochia* genus as are several other species including *Aristolochia tagala*, correctly named as our butterfly's host plant , but Dutchman's Pipe – an exotic – is poisonous to the birdwing caterpillars and should not be grown. I feel that the story boards should not mention Dutchman's Pipe except to warn that it should not be grown.

Apart from a few quibbles which could be rectified I feel that the new Munro-Martin Parklands are a world class presentation that garden designers around the world will come to admire and to attempt to emulate. Those dear ladies the Misses Munro and Martin, would be proud of what their city has done in their memory.



Calytrix microcoma putting on a glorious display

EXCURSION REPORT

Notes from the White Mountains

*Keith Townsend, Native Plants
Queensland, Townsville Branch*

*Photos by John Elliott and Keith
Townsend*

Since the fire of January 2013, the Burra Range¹ is still in recovery mode, and the great display of *Calytrix* is the first mass flowering since the fire.

Generally, *Acacias* were wiped

¹Editors note: the Burra Range is on the southern edge of the White Mountains National Park

out and are regenerating from seed, with most at the 1 to 1.5 m stage although little flowering this year. *Acacia leptostachya* and *Acacia shirleyi* were the worst hit, and the removal of the cover of the 2 to 5 m high plants allowed much more sun to the smaller plants and no doubt contributed to the success of the *Calytrix*.

Grevilleas, always such a feature of the White Mountains, are also slow to recover, and only visible in spots which were missed by fire.

If we get a wet season next year, however, there are a lot of young plants ready to give us a good show.

The photos show all those which you would expect to see in flower in September, and apart

from *Calytrix micorcoma*, include *Comesperma pallida*, *Melaleuca uncinata*, *Persoonia falcata*, *Gompholobium foliolosum*, *Lomandra leucocephala*, *Hardenbergia perbrevidens* and *Petalostylis labichioides*.



Lomandra leucocephala



Melaleuca uncinata



Rugged bare landscape of the White Mountains



Hardenbergia perbrevidens



Gompholobium foliolosum



Petalostylis labichiioides



Persoonia falcata

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Cairns Branch

Meetings and excursions on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

7-9 October 2016 - Yabba

Capricorn - see

www.sgapqld.org.au/whatson/biennial-yabba for more details.

Please note that Qld Region are offering to help with the expenses of attendees from this branch.

16 October 2016 – 12 noon,
Jumrun Nature Walk, Kuranda.

Please call or text Coralie Stuart on 0419 685 919 to confirm your attendance.

20 November 2016 -

Christmas breakup and BYO barbecue. Home of Tony and Trudi Roberts, Brinsmead.

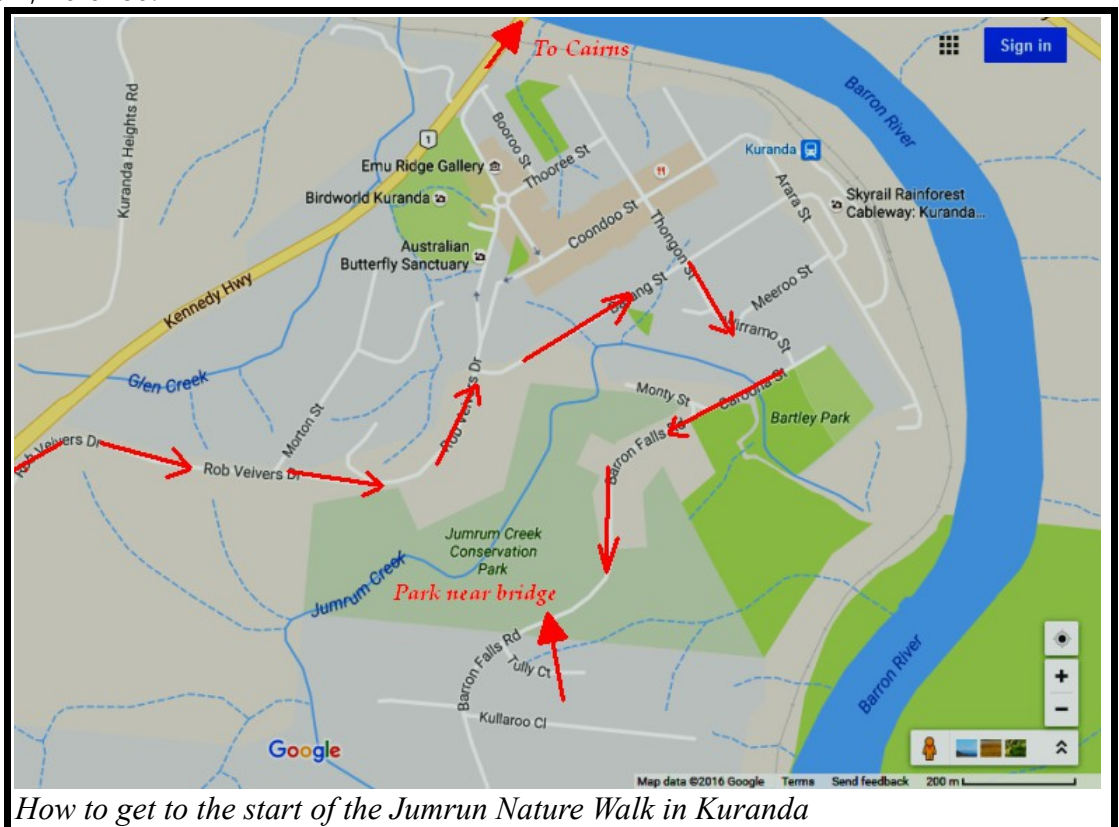
Tablelands Branch

Meetings on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Excursion the following Sunday. Any queries, please contact Chris Jaminon on 4091 4565 or email hjaminon@bigpond.com

Townsville Branch

Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, February to November, in Annandale Community Centre at 8pm, and holds excursions the following Sunday.

See www.sgaptownsville.org.au/ for more information.



How to get to the start of the Jumrun Nature Walk in Kuranda

SGAP CAIRNS BRANCH 2016 COMMITTEE

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