

SGAP Cairns

Society for Growing Australian Plants Inc., Cairns Branch
Celebrating our 40th year

NEWSLETTER 203 AUGUST 2020



July excursion

Stuart Worboys

Late for Davies Creek Falls

The day was gloriously warm, with light breezes blowing through the Davies Creek valley, and I was running late. I arrived 20 minutes after 12 to find the falls car park empty of familiar faces. After quickly running down to the falls lookout I returned dejected and alone, and happily ran into Sharren and Rick Wong, who'd missed been hunting for SGAPPers further up the road.

The three of us made for a small scale SGAP outing, but we made the most of the fine weather, wandering at our own speed along the creek and through the woodlands clothing the granite slopes of the Lamb Range, with Rick photographing the colours and textures of the surrounding landscape.

Davies Creek rises in the rainforests of the high Lamb Range, but then flows north and west into

drier country before tumbling over its spectacular falls on its way to the confluence with the Barron River. Here in the shadow of the ranges, rainfall is lower and the sandy soils rapidly dry out, resulting in a grassy woodland ecosystem. Amongst the grasses are wild flowers (*Cyanthilium* and *Wahlenbergia*) and patches of shrubbery. The vegetation here is Australian through and through, dominated by a canopy of mixed eucalypts and bloodwoods with grass trees, peas, grevilles and a rich diversity of wattles.



Acacia leptostachya (Townsville wattle) overhanging Davies Creek.



SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS INC., CAIRNS BRANCH

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Indeed, we were fortunate our that visit coincided with the flowering of Townsville Wattle (*Acacia leptostachya*), *Acacia flavescens*, *Acacia whitei* and *Acacia calyculata*.

Along the creek, protected from fire but prone to extremes of wet season flood, grew strong and flexible Myrtaceae: *Melaleuca leucadendra*, *M. viminalis*, *Tritaniopsis exiliiflora* and *Syzygium oleosum*. In sunny mud patches amongst the rocks we spotted tiny herbs: hat pins (*Eriocaulon*), mosses, *Stylidium* and carnivorous bladderworts (*Utricularia*).



Caladenia carnea (pink fingers)

We followed the path up the creek to a lovely pool with sunny beach and surrounded by steep granite pavements. These pavements were covered by mats of a strange little grass, *Micraira subulifolia*, with shrubs of flowering *Pseudanthus ligulatus* growing where soils were slightly deeper.



Coronidium rupicola

Returning to the car park, we happened upon a cluster of beautiful pink ground orchids, *Caladenia carnea* growing amongst the grass. Although a widespread species, occurring across eastern Australia and the north island of New Zealand, it was a great pleasure to see so many of these delicate orchids in one place.

The circuit track at Davies Creek Falls is short and easy going, but there is a lot to see if you only stop to look!



Micraira subulifolia



Pseudanthus ligulatus

Species observed at Davies Creek

Flowering

Plants	Family	Species	Common Name
	Apocynaceae	<i>Alstonia muelleriana</i>	Hard milkwood
	Apocynaceae	<i>Alyxia spicata</i>	
	Apocynaceae	<i>Parsonsia velutina</i>	
	Asteraceae	<i>Coronidium rupicola</i>	
	Asteraceae	<i>Cyanthilium cinereum</i>	
	Burseraceae	<i>Canarium australianum</i>	Scrub turpentine
	Capparaceae	<i>Capparis canescens</i>	
	Caryophyllaceae	<i>Wahlenbergia</i>	Bluebells
	Casuarinaceae	<i>Casuarina cunninghamiana</i>	River sheoak
	Cunoniaceae	<i>Schizomeria whitei</i>	White birch
	Cyperaceae	<i>Gahnia aspera</i>	
	Elaeocarpaceae	<i>Elaeocarpus eumundi</i>	Eumundi quandong
	Eriocaulaceae	<i>Eriocaulon</i>	Hatpins
	Euphorbiaceae	<i>Pseudanthus ligulatus</i>	
	Fabaceae	<i>Acacia calyculata</i>	
	Fabaceae	<i>Acacia flavescens</i>	Red wattle
	Fabaceae	<i>Acacia leptostachya</i>	Townsville wattle
	Fabaceae	<i>Acacia simsii</i>	
	Fabaceae	<i>Acacia whitei</i>	
	Fabaceae	? <i>Hovea densivellosa</i>	
	Fabaceae	<i>Indigofera pratense</i>	
	Fabaceae	<i>Jacksonia thesioides</i>	
	Lamiaceae	<i>Clerodendrum floribundum</i>	
	Lecythidiaceae	<i>Planchonia careya</i>	Cocky apple
	Lentibulariaceae	<i>Utricularia</i>	Bladderwort
	Myrtaceae	<i>Corymbia citriodora</i>	Lemon-scented gum
	Myrtaceae	<i>Corymbia clarksoniana</i>	Clarkson's bloodwood
	Myrtaceae	<i>Eucalyptus granitica</i>	Granite ironbark
	Myrtaceae	<i>Melaleuca leucadendra</i>	Weeping paperbark
	Myrtaceae	<i>Melaleuca viminalis</i>	Bottlebrush
	Myrtaceae	<i>Syncarpia glomulifera</i>	Turpentine
	Myrtaceae	<i>Syzygium oleosum</i>	
	Myrtaceae	<i>Tristaniopsis exiliflora</i>	Watergum
	Orchidaceae	<i>Cymbidium</i>	
	Phyllanthaceae	<i>Breynia stipitata</i>	Fart bush
	Phyllanthaceae	<i>Glochidion harveyanum</i>	
	Phyllanthaceae	<i>Phyllanthus dallachyanus</i>	
	Phyllanthaceae	<i>Phyllanthus fuernrohrii</i>	
	Phyllanthaceae	<i>Phyllanthus lamprophyllus</i>	
	Poaceae	<i>Micraira subulifolia</i>	
	Poaceae	<i>Mnesithea rottboelioides</i>	
	Proteaceae	<i>Banksia aquilonia</i>	
	Proteaceae	<i>Grevillea glauca</i>	
	Proteaceae	<i>Persoonia falcata</i>	Geebung
	Rubiaceae	<i>Atractocarpus sessilis</i>	
	Salicaceae	<i>Scolopia braunii</i>	
	Santalaceae	<i>Exocarpos latifolius</i>	Broad-leaved cherry
	Sapindaceae	<i>Dodonaea</i>	Hop bush
	Sapindaceae	<i>Jagera pseudorhus</i>	
	Stylidiaceae	<i>Stylidium</i>	Trigger plant
	Thymelaeaceae	<i>Wikstroemia indica</i>	
	Verbenaceae	* <i>Stachytarpheta cayennensis</i>	Snakeweed
	Xanthorrhoeaceae	<i>Xanthorrhoea johnsonii</i>	Grass tree
Ferns			
	Polypodiaceae	<i>Drynaria rigidula</i>	Basket fern

Plants in the garden - Wombat Berry

Matthew McIntosh

The floral diversity in Australia has an unmitigated mind-blowing effect on anyone interested botany and what native species may be useful or practical to grow in an urban or semi-urban setting.

Unfortunately, many native species are often overlooked in terms of their value to home gardens and important contributions to wildlife connectivity values and resource availability within modified urban environments. Additionally, *ex-situ* individuals or populations of conservation significant species can be important in providing decentralised conservation values to wild populations. Therefore, over time, I would like to present brief articles on native flora species that have the potential to contribute to ecological resilience and/or diversity within modified urban landscapes, while still providing aesthetic and/or practical values to home growers.

In this article, I will be discussing the Wombat Berry (*Eustrephus latifolius*).

General description

Wombat Berry is an Australian native twining or scrambling vine within the Laxmanniaceae family. This species can be commonly encountered along the entirety of the east coast of mainland Australia in habitats ranging from dry woodlands to wet forests.

Two natural variants of this species occur within its known distribution. These include broad and narrow leaved varieties, the former of which can be observed within wet forests around the Cairns area. Personal observations reveal that the narrow-leaved variety is more common in dry woodland communities as the narrower leaves are likely to be beneficial in these dry areas with higher light intensity.

This species has climbing stems to 6 m long with broad to narrow leaves. The flowers of the Wombat Berry are small but both distinct and attractive when in profusion. Flowers can be white to pink and have fringes on the upper surfaces of the petals. Fruit are orange capsules that split when ripe, revealing black, glossy seeds that dangle from the open fruit. The flowers and fruit of this species attract a variety of native birds and invertebrates. The roots of this species produce numerous tubers that store nutrients and are eaten by wombats in the southern portion of its distribution. Additionally, this species has a variety of traditional uses.

A very similar species, the Scrambling Lily (*Geitonoplesium cymosum*), can also be found growing in similar locations to the Wombat Berry. However, the Scrambling Lily can be most readily distinguished from the Wombat Berry by its small, dark fruit. This species likely provides similar values to the Wombat Berry within the home garden and urban environment.

Growing conditions

I have noted this species to grow in soils ranging from hard clays to sand and also in small pockets of soil in steep bedrock banks along ephemeral watercourses. Therefore, this species is likely to be hardy in a range of soils. Additionally, the broad natural distribution of this species along the east coast of Australia likely means that it is tolerant of a variety of climatic conditions.

The tuberous growths that form on the roots of this species store nutrients allowing this species to persist for a period during dry conditions. Therefore, once established, this species should be drought tolerant. Conversely, personal experience has shown that this species also thrives in waterlogged clay soil during the Cairns wet season.

Depending on the available circumstances or preferred planting location both the narrow and broad leaves varieties should be considered use in gardens. These varieties should be used in the context of their respective occurrence in natural

vegetation communities. This being that the narrow-leaved variety will likely perform better in drier situations with more sun and the broad-leaved variety in wetter situations with a higher abundance of shade. These recommendations are based on personal observations only and both varieties will likely thrive in any location, however the results of natural selection are generally an informative guide.

Uses in the garden

Due to the traits and natural tolerances of this species it can become a valued addition to the home garden for several reasons:

- Flowers and fruits are attractive and draw in various wildlife including native bees, birds, mammals and other invertebrates.
- The natural tolerances of this species to a wide variety of soil types and climatic conditions mean that it is suitable for many garden locations and types.
- This species can be grown along a trellis as a screening plant and may also be hedged to size and shape over time. Similarly, it may

also be grown in pots on a small to medium trellis in a patio situation. However, more maintenance will likely be required to maintain a dense, attractive appearance and avoid the plant from scrambling.

- Conversely, it may also be grown unsupported to form a scrambling shrub in a larger garden or placed in a hanging pot to display cascading growth.



Narrow-leaved form of *Eustrephus latifolius*, forming an attractive and dense cover for a home fence.

From my experience to date, plants have a low recruitment rate of seedlings compared to the number of seeds produced in the garden, meaning that this species is unlikely to become weedy or unmanageable. However, if preferred, fresh seeds can be readily germinated with minimal effort under controlled circumstances. Overall, this species has an array of uses within the home garden and has the potential to

contribute to ecological values in modified urban landscapes.

Patsy Penny's Pandanaceae

Photos by Patsy Penny

The *Pandanus* family is a peculiar group of trees and vines. Long thought to be related to palms, DNA analysis has revealed its closest relatives are *Stemona*, a delicate, black-flowered vine found in Cape York and southeast Asia, and *Cyclanthus*, a massive central American herb used to weave Panama hats.

Pandanaceae occurs throughout tropical Asia and Africa, and includes five genera, three of which occur in Australia. They are distinguished by features of their fruits, which are actually clusters of fruits derived from many flowers, and called syncarps. The three genera are *Freycinetia*, characterised by its vine-like habit, *Benstonea*, characterised by syncarps covered in sharp spines (these are remnants of the stigmas) that break up into one-seeded segments (drupes), and *Pandanus* characterised by syncarps lacking sharp spines and which break up into one-seeded segments (*Pandanus zea*, *Pandanus solms-laubachii*) or several seeded segments called phalanges (e.g. *Pandanus tectorius*, *Pandanus cookii*).

On a recent trip to Cape York, Patsy encountered some of Australia's rare and more unusual Pandanaceae. Her photographs are shown below.



Benstonea lauterbachii. The fruit clusters (technically called syncarps) are covered in sharp spines, a characteristic of the genus.



Pandanus zea. A rare species found only in swamps on Cape York, its massive fruits (enclosed in long brown bracts in this photo) are yellow, and look oddly like corn cobs.



Pandanus conicus showing phalanges with blunt spines.

Upcoming events

Townsville

Meetings of Native Plants Queensland - Townsville Branch on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7pm, Annandale Community Centre. Excursions the following Sunday.

Website: www.npqtownsville.org.au

Tablelands

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.

Cairns Branch

Sunday 16 August, 12 noon. Cattana Wetlands, Dunne Road, Smithfield - see arrow on map below. Meet at the entrance car park. Bring lunch, sun protection, comfortable shoes and insect repellent. Bring your Cattana Wetlands Guide!

