

S G A P C Cairns

NEWSLETTER 210 MAY 2021

Forest Gardens, April 2021

Don Lawie

We met for lunch at Mark and Helen's place, just a short drive from the Cape York Botanical Walk in the Cairns suburb of Forest Gardens. Following a short admin meeting after lunch we carpoled into Helen and Mark's vehicles and drove to the walk's start.

Heavy clouds opened as we alighted so it was "Brollies Out" and we set off. A lone *Gardenia scabrella*(?) flower bid us welcome as we strolled down the well kept bitumen path. Dr Rob regaled us with names and anecdotes, e.g. a large specimen of *Alstonia spectabilis* was in full fruit; this species was one of the original plantings chosen by Botanist and world-renowned horticulturalist, Anton van der Schans and had multiplied so well that it became known as "Anton's Curse".

It was our intention to, as well as make a species list, enter eligible trees on the Cairns Regional Council Register of Significant Trees, but every time Rob produced his device it rained even harder so it will have to be left for another day.

We did find some unusual trees; there were just a few flowers on a *Eucalyptus phoenicia* which is a Northern Territory tree that also grows near Hopevale outside Cooktown. Some other Peninsula trees had found Cairns's climate so amenable that they have become more curses for Anton.



Harpullia ramiflora is such a case.

Only one orchid species made its appearance: the terrestrial Shepherd's Crook Orchid *Geodorum densiflorum* was preparing to send out its flower spike shaped like, yes, a Shepherd's Crook!

We traversed this walk last November; then, it was a burning hot day and we walked uphill. Today we went downhill in steady rain which increased as we neared the end [Editor: 189 mm fell at nearby Cairns Racecourse in the 24 hours to 9 a.m. on 19th April, with an extraordinary 804.4 mm recorded for the month.]. We scuttled to a handy park to take advantage of the shelter shed and await Helen and Mark's lift back to

their place or afternoon tea poolside. The smiles on the faces at walk's end show that Wet Tropics rain does not deter Wet Tropics people.



Raffle prizes - mounted orchid babies.

REPORT FOR CAIRNS COUNCIL ON THE CAPE YORK BOTANICAL WALK, FOREST GARDENS, CAIRNS CITY

Cairns Branch, Society for Growing Australian Plants.

The Cape York Botanical Walk is situated between Treetops Drive and Sawpit Drive. It follows the creek line of Sawpit Gully on a downhill trajectory and is approximately 400 metres in length. The scheme was to replicate a trip south from Cape York by planting appropriate plants of each area.

Location signs such as: "Iron Range", "McIlWraith Range", "Transition Forest & Woodland Edges", marked the walker's progress and individual trees were tagged with botanical and common name, family and place of natural occurrence. The walk is thought to have been planted about 25 years ago as a Council educational initiative planned and executed under the control of Botanist Anton van der Schans.

Cairns SGAP has traversed the walk twice recently, on the 15 November last year, and the 18 April 2021. The November walk was uphill, on a very hot sunny day; the

April visit was accomplished on a day of rain which varied from light to moderate to heavy tropical downpour, which did not deter the intrepid investigators.

The walk today is in good condition with a bitumen path 3 m in width in good condition and clear weed-free verges. The original intent of a Cape York walk has become blurred by age. There are only a few individual plant tags remaining and the wooden geographic locators have become almost unreadable due to lichen and fungal growth.

Several weed species – possibly garden escapees and bird-spread – have become established but there is no sign of garden refuse dumping. It is possible that neighbouring householders have planted some of their favourites since the tree line has numerous young trees of various species.

Some of the Cape York plants have thrived in their new home and have multiplied inordinately. Such a case is *Alstonia spectabilis*, Hard Milkwood, which Dr Jago told us has become known as "Anton's Curse". Another is *Harpullia ramiflora*, Cape York Tulipwood, which is an attractive tree producing many small red fruit on trunk and branches.

The fruit are spread by birds and germinate readily.

Only one member of the orchid family was encountered – the Shepherd's Crook Orchid, *Geodorum densiflorum*. It was early in the year for this terrestrial orchid, and more will appear as a result of the heavy rain which triggers their period of life above ground.

Myrtle Rust was in evidence, most notably on the Kanuka Box *Tristaniopsis exiliflora*, which would otherwise flourish in this situation.

At the eastern end of the walk one may cross Sawpit Street and view a large waterlily filled pond. Beyond that is a delightful small park with shelter shed/barbecue, tennis and basketball courts and a childrens playground – just the place to finish the walk.

One aim of the day was to enter any suitable trees on the CRC Significant Trees data base – Dr Jago is empowered to do so – but the constant rain negated the use of the necessary electronic device. Rob did manage to put in some *Syzygium alligineum*, Onionwood, trees in Manilla Close before we set off.

This report was prepared by Donald Lawie, President, Cairns Branch SGAP.
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NEWS FROM TOWNSVILLE BRANCH - Burra Range Outing

The Townsville branch of Native Plants Queensland is planning an outing to the Burra Range in conjunction with the Mackay NPQ Branch, over the weekend of the 19th and 20th June. The idea is that members from Mackay will drive up to Charters Towers on Friday 18th and stay for three nights in a motel, making two long day outings to the Burra. (A three-hour round-trip drive leaves 6-7 hours on site.)

On Saturday 19th our branch, in the capable hands of Betsy Jackes, will give an introductory tour of the park taking in many of the new landmarks that we have been able to visit and enjoy over the past few years. On Sunday the visit will be less structured, but there is always the opportunity to visit the northern end of the park via the new access road from Torrens Creek. Contact the branch secretary, John Elliott for more information (jw-elliott@aapt.net.au).

Some images from a recent trip to Iron Range/Lockhart River



Momordica cochinchinensis



Amylothea dictyophleba



Hamadryad butterfly on Parsonsia velutina

What's Happening...

Cairns

Sunday 16 May: Earl Hill.
Explore the newly constructed tracks around Earl Hill at Trinity Park.

Directions: Travel north from Cairns City on the Cook Highway. Three km north of the Kuranda turnoff, turn right on to Reed Road towards Trinity Park. Meet at the car park on the corner of Reed Road and Roberts Drive. See Map.

Sunday 18 July: Lake Placid

Sunday 15 August: Tinaroo Creek Road. The turn off onto Tinaroo Creek Rd is approximately 2 km to the east of Mareeba along the Kennedy Hwy. From there it is approximately another 20 kms to one of the first sites and the track goes further with more sites.

Tablelands

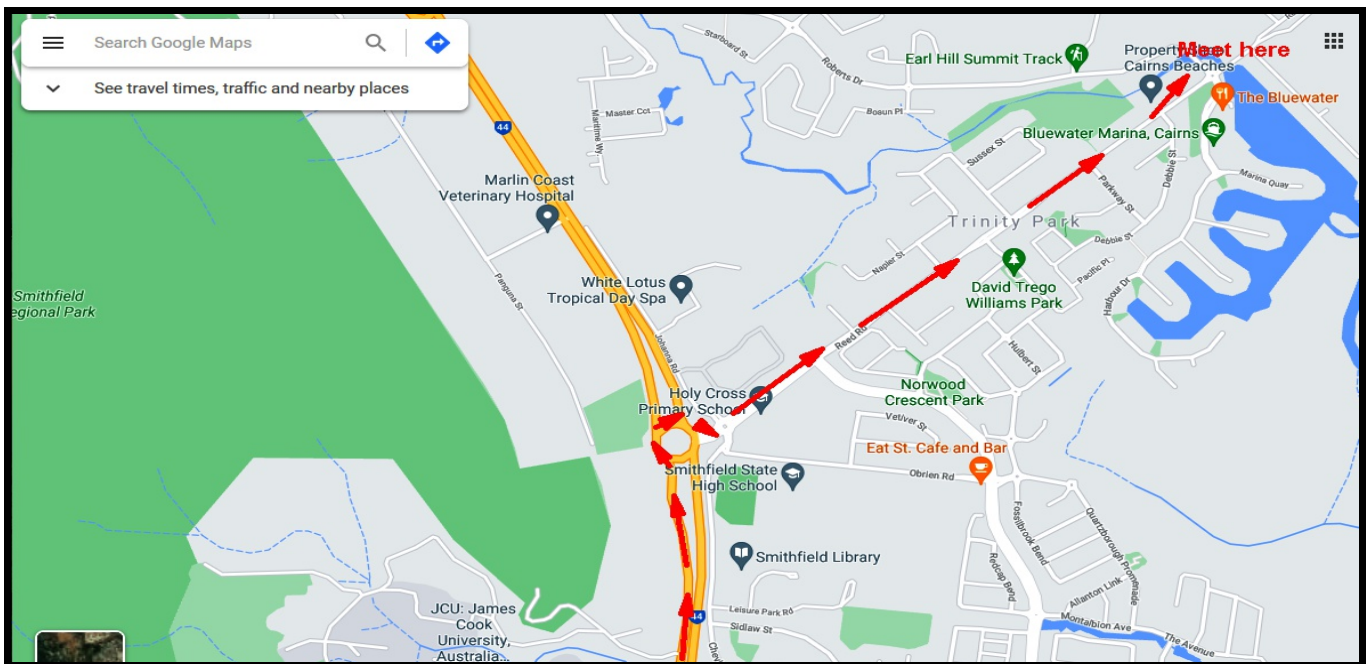
Meetings on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm, Tolga CWA Hall. Excursions the following Sunday.

Excursion officer: Peter Radke, 40914565.

Townsville

Meeting of Native Plants Queensland - Townsville Branch at Oonoonba Community Hall (Shannon Street Oonoonba).

Sunday 16 May: Our long serving founding member and keen gardener Don Glasgow cordially welcomes you to view his garden at 1672 Riverway Drive, Kelso, located at the far end of Riverway Drive, close to the Ross River Dam.



SGAP Cairns Branch 2021-2022 Committee

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