



Society for Growing Australian Plants

Cairns Branch Inc.

Newsletter 243, August 2024

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The discovery of Callistemon

'Wilderness White'

R.L Jago

Since the recent passing on the 12 July 2024 of Mary Gandini, Life Member, and friend of the Cairns Branch of the Society for Growing Australian Plants several people have asked if I knew the story of Mary's involvement in the introduction into horticulture of this plant. I have been told the story many times by both Mary and Gary Hardy, two of the people involved in the discovery of this plant. Rather than rely on my fading memory, I went straight to the most reliable source, Mr Gary Hardy, who was kind enough to supply the following. Gary writes:

"Callistemon 'Wilderness White' was discovered while on an outing with the Cairns Bushwalkers

Club in August 1985 while walking along one of the many creeks in the mountains behind Cairns in Far North Queensland. Three of the members of the group, Gary Hardy, Mary Gandini and Reyn Wiles, at the same time, were drawn to a white flowering *Callistemon* on the other side of the creek. We crossed the creek to look at the plant and realised we had found a white flowering form of *Callistemon viminalis*. The three of us did a scout around the area and discovered that all the other plants in the area were of the normal red flowering form. We felt a fair bit of excitement about our find and we decided to come back at a later date and collect some cuttings in the hope of propagating this white flowering form. On our second visit to the site we were able to take some cuttings suitable for propagation and to obtain a



Callistemon 'Wilderness White'

good specimen to send to the Australian National Herbarium in Canberra. The cuttings were passed onto Margaret Haupt who had a Native plant Nursery and at the time was a member of the Cairns Branch of the Society for Growing Australian Plants. We eventually managed to grow enough stock to do a release of the plant at a Cairns Garden Expo in 1986. Since then it has been well accepted by the horticultural industry and gardeners and is now cultivated in gardens throughout Australia and the world."

Notes on the registration of *Callistemon viminalis* 'Wilderness White'

1. This cultivar must be grown by vegetative means to preserve the cultivar form.
2. Colour code: Royal Horticultural Society colour code 1966.

Anthers: yellow group 11B

Filaments: white group 155C

Reference specimen: Accession No. 370, the cultivar first received in October 1985.

Registration applied for by Mr Gary Hardy on behalf of Mrs Mary Gandini and Mr Reyn Wiles.

Callistemon or Melaleuca?

Another question frequently asked: "Is it a *Callistemon* or a *Melaleuca*?' Traditionally species placed in the genus *Callistemon* have free stamens while those placed in *Melaleuca* have stamens united in bundles. It is generally accepted but not by all authorities that *Callistemon* should be placed within *Melaleuca*.

Taxonomic history

The first scientific collections of *Melaleuca viminalis* were made by the English botanist Sir Joseph Banks (1743 - 1820) and the Swedish botanist Dr Daniel Carlsson Solander (1733-1782) at the Endeavour River in 1770. Banks and Solander assigned these gatherings the manuscript name *Metrosideros viminalis* which was adopted by the German botanist Joseph Gaertner (1732-1791) in his *De Fructibus et Seminibus Plantarum* in 1788.



Joseph Gaertner (source: en.wikipedia.org)

The Scottish botanist George Don (1798 - 1856) transferred it to the genus *Callistemon* in *London's Hortus Britannicus* published in 1830, where it remained until transferred to the genus *Melaleuca* by Australian botanist Norman Byrnes (1922 - 1998) in the journal *Austrobaileya* in 1984.

MORE SAD NEWS

I am advised that Yuruga Nursery will be closing its retail operations on Saturday 31 August. After this date, it will open by appointment only, provided an order of greater than \$100 will be made.

I'm sure over the years all of us have filled our gardens with interesting and obscure Australian tropicals from the Yuruga retail nursery. I have in my collection an old catalogue listing hundreds of species which were brought into cultivation by Yuruga in its heyday, a testament to the energy and enthusiasm of its owners.

Cooktown 2024

Stuart Worboys

A small contingent of Cairns and Tablelands made their way to Cooktown, with a stop at Yuruga along the way to collect strange and wonderful native plants including *Spathoglottis paulinae*, *Melastoma balls-headleyi* and an unusual variegated *Myrsine*.

I arrived Friday afternoon to find the new curator, Nikko Menzel, still at work. Nikko and his wife are now settled in Cooktown, their children are enrolled at the local Endeavour College, and the family is becoming part of the community. We discussed plans for the weekend, before I took leave to set up camp. Dinner that evening was at fish and chip's at Cook's landing, still the finest place in town for an informal dinner.

Saturday morning was filled with planting, weeding, watering and exploring the garden with Nikko. Good homes were found for the new garden additions, which also included *Orthosiphon* (cat's whiskers) propagated by Val Carnie. In the afternoon we transferred to the nursery area, helping with potting work. In the evening, Nikko and his family joined us for a cookup at the Gardens' public barbecue.

On Sunday morning Emma Treves (Tablelands SGAP) and I took the hike over to Cherry Tree Bay, making the most of the beautiful weather. We were home in time to join the rest of the crew on yet another walk, this time taking the Quarry Track to see Cooktown's original rock quarry. The path eventually led us to Finch Bay, where we admired the broad sandy beach and crocgy looking creek, before heading back to the gardens, and the long, 320 km drive back to Cairns.

What's Happening?

Sunday 18 August 2024

Cairns SGAP to Kewarra Beach Park. Meet at the Kewarra Beach barbecue pavillion located at the northern end of Kewarra Street.

Bring a chair and some lunch. Afterwards we'll take a stroll down the beach towards Taylor Point.

Sunday 18 August 2024

Townsville NPQ to Anderson Botanic Gardens in Mundingburra, to explore the Cape York Peninsula Section with its wonderful collection of plants native to Far North Queensland. Meet at 9.00 am inside the Balls Lane Entrance.

Sunday 1 September 2024

Roger Smith of Tablelands SGAP has invited us to see his garden, located at 5 Warril Drive, Kuranda. Meet at 12 noon. BYO chair and lunch.

Saturday 14–Sunday 15 September 2024

White Mountains National Park will be Townsville NPQ destination for the weekend 14th and 15th September. Contact the Secretary, John Elliott (johnwelliott53@gmail.com) for more details.

Sunday 20 October 2024

Cairns SGAP to Hartleys Creek. Details to be advised.

SGAP Cairns Branch 2024-2025 Committee

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Potting up in the Cooktown Botanic Gardens nursery.



The marvellous view of Finch Bay from the lookout point on the Cherry Bay track.



Peter and Patsy Penny helping clean up the rainforest garden



Atractocarpus sessilis, a ubiquitous understorey shrub in the Gardens reserve



Saturday evening barbecue



Xanthorrhoea johnsonii growing at the old quarry site.