

Native Plants Queensland

Cairns Branch

◆
August 2026



July Highlights

Annual Cairns/Tablelands Working Bee at Cooktown Botanic Gardens 2026

Stuart Worboys

After 40 years of annual working bees by SGAP Cairns and Tablelands, the SGAP and Banks and Solander beds at Cooktown Botanic Gardens are properly established and looking just fine. They are well maintained under the watchful eye of Garden's Curator Nikko Menzel: neatly mulched, well watered, and carefully edged with small granite rocks collected from around the gardens site. The SGAP bed is now home to a diverse little forest, with mature *Aphananthe philippense*, *Pandanus*, and *Terminalia muelleri* shading a scattering of ferns, *Crinum*, *Dianella caerulea* and *Alpinia caerulea*.



SGAP garden bed tended by Eoin, Patsy and Peter.

Next Excursion

Harvey Creek
16 August 2026, 10am
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

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

SGAP Library

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

President	Tony Roberts
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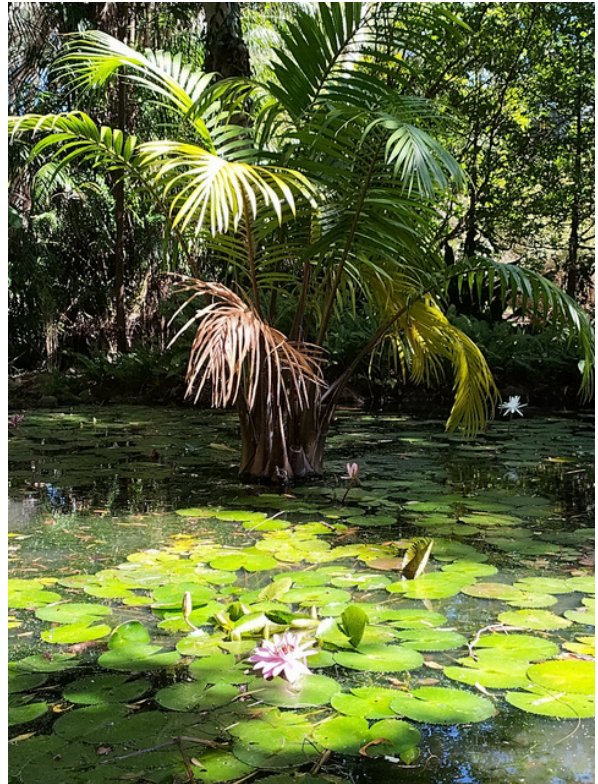
Rachel Platte
Tony Roberts
Sandy Watts
Coralie Uebergang

Like any garden there have been losses that will have to be managed. The sad death of a gloriously gnarly *Banksia dentata* in the Banks and Solander bed creates a gap that will need to be filled with a suitable Banks-collected replacement. An *Acacia holosericea* in the same bed is near the end of its short life and will also soon depart this world. In the nearby SGAP bed, some of last years plantings are not going so well, with losses of *Mackinlaya confusa* and possibly the *Pittosporum rubiginosum*.

This year's working bee contingent comprised of five from Cairns: Tony, Trudi, Patsy, Peter, newcomer Eoin (pronounced Owen), and myself. We brought with us a generous donation from James Cook University Townsville – a collection of rare Cape York species propagated from materials collected on a 2025 field trip. Thanks to Brandan Espe for these contributions. As some of the donated materials were not yet ready for planting, we selected a few interesting plants from the nursery to plant. Into the SGAP bed went 2 *Eupomatia laurina*, 1 *Gardenia psidioides* and 2 *Coleus venustus*, the latter collected from the slopes of Mt Tozer. Into the Banks and Solander bed went 2 *Sersalisia sericea*.



Newly planted *Voacanga grandifolia*



***Nypa* palm, Cooktown Botanic Gardens.**

Space being short in the SGAP and Banks and Solander beds, we moved up the path to the Rainforest bed, where we planted three exceptionally rare specimens. These included two plants of *Voacanga grandifolia*, a frangipani-like species of Apocynaceae widespread in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, but on the Australian mainland known only from a four kilometre stretch on the road to Captain Billy's Landing, and a plant of *Syzygium puberulum*, an unusual and untidy lilly pilly occurring in the Iron Range, Lockerbie Scrub and Papua New Guinea. Also into this bed went five attractive *Syzygium* from the nursery.

All planned works having been completed by lunchtime, Nikko took us on a bracing stroll through Gallup Reserve to Cherry Tree Bay. From here we went back up the hill to where Cyclone Jasper's extreme rains had swept away the side of a hill, and the walking track with it. Nikko proudly showed the results of significant works and investment – the track had

been largely repaired and a solid bridge built across the dangerous erosion gully. We continued on up the hill to check out a scattering of unusual concrete foundations. These were the remains of buildings constructed during World War Two to support the radar installation on top of Grassy Hill. New interpretive signs explained their assumed function (as related by locals), although it seemed some of that information is still not officially available.

The day ended with a barbecue hosted by Nikko and family. That evening, there being only a few of us, we were able to squeeze our camp into the fenced nursery compound. This allowed us easy access to the site's facilities in case of late night emergencies.

Next morning we headed northwards towards Hopevale. In the broad green Endeavour River valley, Nikko, his wife Sarah and son Alfio have a beautiful pole home set amongst fruit trees and vegetable gardens. It is surrounded by natural bushland, with the Endeavour River just a short walk away. We toured the natural bushland, wandering down to the river where the forest was populated by *Archontophoenix alexandrae*, *Tristaniopsis laurina* and giant *Dillenia alata*, then upstream to a wander amongst the multiple trunks of



Lost in the trunks of a giant strangler fig.

a spectacular multi-stemmed *Ficus virens*. Afterwards we were treated to tea, coffee and cakes at the family home before winding up and commencing the long drive home.

Our Cooktown weekend was nowhere near as hectic as the working bees of two decades ago. Back then, the Gardens were poorly supported, with no fencing or concrete paths, and little funding for mulch or new plants. Our groups saw a need to support the development of these historic gardens, and we happily



On the track to Cherry Tree Bay

donated our time and resources to their improvement. Nowadays, the need for a full day of backbreaking labour is gone. But our visits are still welcome, and like any garden there is still work to be done to keep the Banks and Solander bed and

the SGAP bed in line with the intent of their original establishment. It's been a pleasure to watch the Gardens change over the years and I believe they are now the best they have ever been in their 150 year history.

Harvey Creek Excursion

Location: Harvey Creek Scenic Reserve and nearby private property, Harvey Creek Rd, Bellenden Ker.

Park near the Barringtonia tree on Harvey Creek Road for a short walk to a nearby private property.

