



# Society for Growing Australian Plants (Queensland Region) Inc.

Cairns Branch  
PO Box 199  
Earlville Qld 4870

Newsletter No. 69  
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## Society Office Bearers

Chairperson	Ing Toh	40 310 551
Vice Chairperson	Mary Gandini	40 542 190
Secretary	Greg Keith	40 981 130
Treasurer	Robert Jago	40
Librarian	David Warmington	40 443 398

**Membership Subscriptions- Qld Region-** Renewal \$35.00, New Members \$40, each additional member of household \$1.00

**Cairns Branch Fees** -\$10.00 Full Year

To access our Library for loan of books, please contact David Warmington

## Dates to Remember

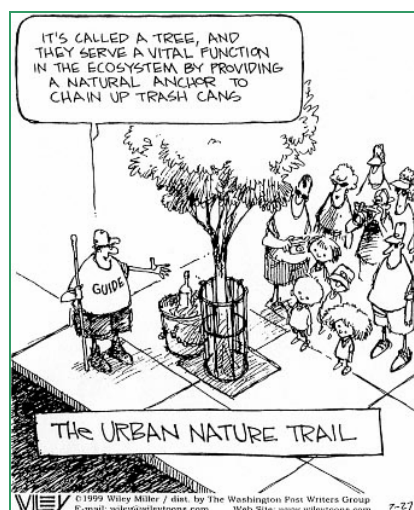
### Cairns Branch Meetings and Excursion – third Saturday of each month.

21 July Canceled due to show day long weekend.  
18 August Julatten.

### Tablelands Branch – Sunday following the meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month.

29 July TBA

**Any queries please phone Ian Evans 4096 5770.**



## Trip Report

Annual Cooktown Botanic Gardens Work Party – 16 & 17 June

Don Lawie

### Introduction

'Twas a very successful weekend, and we achieved more than I had originally expected. Mary, Pauline and I went to the "acres of orchids" on Archer Point Road on the Monday. *Dendrobium rigidum* were in flower, but not a sign of bud on either *D. semifuscum* or *D. discolour*. We found another ridge of orchids, all on blue sand, and also many *Lithomyrtus* shrubs. Mary and Pauline reckon some of the Dendrobes are probably hybrids, but it's impossible to be certain until they flower. We went back last October but were a bit late; will plan a return trip this year, perhaps September, to view flowering plants. We'll take the opportunity to stay at John and Mary Noonan's Cooktown Van Park and sound him out about us all staying there this year.

### The Action

This was our sixth year in the Gardens, and at last our previous efforts are having an effect. Perhaps our biggest win was in fencing several of the garden areas and then concentrating on them. The Banks and Solander Garden needed only a bit of weeding and pruning this year, followed by a good mulching to bring it back to an acceptable appearance.



**Chris and Jan in the SGAP garden**

The same applied to the rejuvenated SGAP Garden, and more plants were put in this year to increase understorey species variety. These

plants were provided by Yuruga Nursery at a vastly reduced price and paid for evenly by both Cairns and Tableland branches. Being Yuruga plants they were, of course, in A1 condition and of proper provenance for planting in Cooktown.



**Dianne and Don spreading hay whilst the sun shines**

We had twelve starters this year, plus Diana and Dianne from the Gardens staff, so were able to achieve quite a lot. Len and Kate Lawler were *en route* to Europe, so Mary Gandini and Pauline Lawie filled in for Len,

and assisted Dianne to "cook-up" a batch of seed from a Cooktown Orchid (*Dendrobium bigibbum*) and get them sown in jars.



This was done at the Cooktown High School science lab per kind favour of the science teacher there, to take advantage of the closed atmosphere and scientific equipment available. We now await results...

Plants in the nursery area were in better condition than formerly, but Kay and Tablelands Pauline spent their time there profitably, weeding and sorting with technical help from Stuart and Diana, and the area again looks neat and cared for.

The physical area of Cooktown Botanic Gardens is very large, and much of it is still lost in the overgrowth that occurred early in the 20th century after the town and gardens declined. Staff are constantly clearing this growth and our team spent some time following up on the work by cutting back

regrowth, in particular of Albizzia plants. These were brought to the Gardens in the 1880's by the Tropical Plant Acclimitation Society, along with many other species, to see whether they would be suitable for growth in the area. The Albizzia thrived and spread and is now a major weed. John Hall, in his usual thorough fashion, realised that cutting regrowth was only a stopgap effort, and got fair dinkum about the large Albizzias with machete and Tordon, so that there should be quite a gap in the jungle there when next we return.

Jo Wynter, of Nature's Powerhouse, welcomed us again as old friends, and once again embarrassed us with her effusive appreciation and showered us with sumptuous morning and afternoon teas which made returning to work a real effort.



#### **Hard at work**

Sunday morning saw us almost running out of work, so Diana suggested that we concentrate on a rock pile between the nursery and cricket pitch. The team excelled themselves here, and by lunch time had weeded, moved rocks, planted a selection of appropriate plants selected by Stuart from nursery stock, watered and mulched the area to make it a new, attractive spot. I was pleased to put in a large specimen of the Golden Orchid, *Dendrobium discolor*, beside a rock and supported by a tree. The orchid is fully two metres high and has a number of keikis which I tied to the supporting small tree and they will grow onto it. The orchid will flower this year.

#### **The Aftermath**

The Sunday arvo Reward Outing was to Isabella Falls, on Battle Camp Road about 40 km north of Cooktown. The creek,

coloured brown by Melaleuca tannin, flows over a ironstone outcrop in a most attractive fashion, and attracts a variety of plant life. We were pleased to be able to add to the previous plant list, and Pauline, Mary and Jan each found an orchid not previously recorded in the area.

#### **Some Plants Of The Isabella Falls Area**

**TREES:** *Alstonia actinophylla*, *Canarium australianum*, \**Carallia brachiata*, *Allocasuarina torulosa*, *Dillenia alata*, *Erythrophleum chlorostachys*, *Corymbia erythrophloia*, *Cor. phoenicia*, *Eucalyptus tetradonta*, *Ficus platypoda*, *Gmelina dalrympleana*, *Melaleuca quinquenervia*, *Pouteria pohlmaniana*, *Syzygium suborbiculare*, *Tristaniopsis exiliflora*.

#### **LARGE SHRUBS/SMALL TREES:**

*Acacia crassicaarpa*, *Ac. flavescens*, *Banksia dentata*, *Choriceras tricoryne*, *Dodonea polyandra*, *Grevillea glauca*, *G. pteridifolia*, *G. parallela*, *Leptospermum longifolium*, *Mackinlaya sp.*, *Melaleuca viridiflora*, *Neolitsea dealbata*, \**Pandanus sp.*, *Parinari nonda*, *Petalostigma pubescens*, *Persoonia falcata*, *Planchonia careya*, *Atractocarpus sessilis*, \**Xanthorrhoea sp.*, *Xylomelum scottianum*.

**SHRUBS:** *Acacia calyculata*, *Ac. humifusa*, *Ac. simsii*, *Alphitonia excelsa*, *Anthobolus filifolius*, *Breynia oblongifolia*, *Bursaria spinosa*, *Calogyne pilosa*, *Clerodendron cunninghamii*, *Distichostemon malvaceus*, *Kailarsenia ochreatea*, *Gompholobium pinnatum*, *Hibbertia sp.*, *Hibbertia banksii*, *Hovea sp. nov.*, *Indigofera pratensis*, *Jacksonia thesioides*, *Leucopogon sp. nov.*, *Melastoma malabathricum*, *Lithomyrtus retusa*, *Phyllanthus ochrophyllus*, *Rhodomomyrtus sp.*, *Tephrosia astragaloides*.

**VINES:** *Ampelocissus sp.*, *Eustrephus latifolius*, *Flemingia sp.*, *Hardenbergia retusa*, \**Flagellaria indica*.

**FERNS:** *Blechnum cartilagenium*, *B. orientalis*, \**Davallia sp.*, \**Drynaria rigidula.*, \**Pyrrosia longifolia.*, *Schizaea dichotoma*, *Sticherus sp.*

**PALMS:** *Hydriastle wendlandiana*, *Livistona muelleri*.

**CYCAD:** *Cycas media*.

**GRASS,GRASS-LIKE:** *Dimeria ornithopede*, *Eriachne pallescens*, *Gahnia aspera*, *G. sieberana*, *Haemodorum coccineum*, *Ischaemum fragile*, *Paspalidium gracile*, *Thaumastochloa pubescens*.

**SEDGE:** *Schoenus sporteus*.

**TACCA:** *Tacca leontopetaloides*.

**HERB:** *Veronica cinerea*, \**Thysanotus exiliflorus*.

**UNGROUPEd:** *Astrotricha pterocarpa*, *Pogonolobus reticulatus*, *Lamprolobium fruticosum*.

**EPIPHYTES:** \**Dendrobium canaliculatum*, \**D. semifuscum*, \**Dischidia nummularia*, \**Myrmecodia beccari*.

Acknowledgement to P & A Radke, G & N Sankowsky, S.G.A.P. Tablelands Branch.

Re-arranged by Don Lawie, Cairns Branch SGAP, 6 June 2007.

(\*Additions found by Gandini, Elder & Lawie, 16/6/07)

## Tropical Australian Plants

### The Cooktown Orchid, *Dendrobium bigibbum*

*Dendrobium* is a large genus with around 1400 species spread throughout Asia and the Pacific. Australia has about 56 species, many of which are cultivated. Considerable hybridization has been carried out within the genus to produce improved horticultural forms and a number of naturally occurring hybrids are also in cultivation.

Major taxonomic revision of the *Dendrobium* group has occurred in recent years with many species being transferred to new genera. Some of these changes have been reasonably widely accepted (e.g. *Dockrillia*) while the status of others is less certain. The recently published 2007 census of Queensland plants recognises *Dendrobium* and *Dockrillia* in their traditional senses, and has not taken account of the recent radical divisions of some authors.

*Dendrobium bigibbum* (the "Cooktown Orchid") is the floral emblem of Queensland and is probably the best known and most colourful of Australia's orchid species. Like

most dendrobiums, *D. bigibbum* is an epiphytic or occasionally lithophytic orchid.

*D. bigibbum* occurs in the forests of Queensland north from around Mareeba and it is common on the Cape York Peninsular and the islands of Torres Strait. In nature it hybridises with *D. discolor*. The purple flowers are borne on long, terminal racemes and there may be as many as ten flowers on each raceme. Flowers are large, being up to 65 mm in diameter. Occasionally white flowered forms are seen.



**Cooktown Orchid near Mt Carbine, June 2007**

The "Cooktown Orchid" has been cultivated for many years by orchid enthusiasts and has been used in hybridisation work with other Australian and exotic "hard cane" dendrobiums. It likes a dry, sunny position with a minimum of watering and a temperature not below 13° C. In temperate districts the plant requires a heated glasshouse although it can be flowered (with luck!), in temperate coastal areas in a very warm bush house. Plants can usually be obtained through specialist orchid breeders.

*The preceding is an abridged version of an article on the Australian SGAP website:*  
<http://asgap.org.au/d-big.html>

## New Books

*Greg Keith passed on an email from Queensland Landcare, advertising a variety of interesting-looking books. I've selected a few for this month's newsletter.*

Landcare Queensland has launched a new publication service for Queensland and beyond. With a focus on all things landcare related, the bookshop will provide publications related to working and playing in the natural environment.

Members of Landcare Queensland receive a discount. The really, really good news is that membership to Landcare Queensland is only \$20 a year. This list will grow over time, so if you have requests for publications, please email us at [sherryn@landcare.com.au](mailto:sherryn@landcare.com.au).

Landcare Queensland | ABN 81 100 646 268  
PO Box 13204, George Street Q 4003  
Phone 07 3211 4413 | Fax 07 3211 4407

### **A Big Fix: radical solutions for Australia's environmental crisis.**

*Ian Lowe*

The warnings from scientists are urgent and unequivocal - our civilisation is unwittingly stepping in front of an ecological lorry that is about to flatten us. We are using resources future generations will need, damaging environmental systems and compromising social stability by increasing the gap between rich and poor. In *A Big Fix*, pre-eminent scientist and environmentalist Ian Lowe tackles this problem and offers far-reaching solutions to our environmental and social crisis.

Cost: \$16.95. Member's price: \$15.00

### **True Green - 100 Everyday Ways You can Contribute to a Healthier Planet**

*Kim McKay and Jenny Bonnin*

You can save the world! Global warming, greenhouse gases, climate change . often the magnitude of the environmental challenges we face can leave us feeling powerless - but we're not. In *'True Green'*, Kim McKay and Jenny Bonnin, part of the Clean Up Australia team, suggest 100 small ways in which you

can make a big difference, at home, in the garden, at work, while travelling or in your community. Practical, positive and easy to use, this essential reference shows how making simple changes in your everyday life that can contribute to a healthier planet. Don't be true blue - be true green.

Cost: \$20.00. Member's price: \$18.50

### **A field guide to the mammals of Australia**

*Peter Menkhorst*

This fully revised and updated edition of *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Australia* is the only comprehensive guide to identifying all 379 species of mammals known in Australia. This book provides concise and accurate details of the appearance, diagnostic features, distribution, habitat, and key behavioural characteristics of all mammals known to have occurred in Australia or its waters since the time of European settlement. Each double-page spread provides all the information needed to identify an animal, a full-colour illustration of the entire animal, a smaller diagram of diagnostic features, a distribution map, and species description and measurements, including details of how to differentiate between similar species.

### **Noosa's Native Plants**

This is an informative and well produced book describing plants endemic to Noosa Shire, but it is also relevant to the broader south-east Queensland region. This book is divided into ten broad vegetation categories and includes about 500 of the better-known plants. Each chapter begins with a short description of a plant community and where to find examples of this community within the Noosa area.

Cost: \$40.00. Member's price: \$35.00

### **Field Guide to Rainforest trees, shrubs and cilmbers of Fraser Island**

Rainforests are complex living infra-structures, whose secrets are revealed to those who possess the sensitive ability to penetrate the forest in a gentle and enquiring manner. This book offers an opportunity to feel at one with the beautiful rainforests on Fraser Island by enabling the reader to identify, with

limited material, each species using the keys provided.

Cost: \$18.00. Member's price: \$16.00

### **Pasture plants of north-west Queensland I**

*Jenny Milson*

Pasture plants of north-west Queensland is one of a two-book set on the flora of this region. Well-researched text is supported by hundreds of photographs for easy identification in the field. The books are designed to highlight the region's unique flora for a wide audience. They place particular emphasis on promoting plant identification as a decision-support tool for today's and tomorrow's land managers.

Cost: \$50.80. Member's price: \$45.50

### **Trees and Shrubs of north-west Queensland**

*Jenny Milson*

Trees and shrubs of north-west Queensland is one of a two-book set on the flora of this region. Well-researched text is supported by hundreds of photographs for easy identification in the field. The books are designed to highlight the region's unique flora for a wide audience. They place particular emphasis on promoting plant identification as a decision-support tool for today's and tomorrow's land managers.

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**If you have any book reviews, pictures, notes on growing tropical Australian plants or trip reports you'd like published in this newsletter, please send them to me: Stuart Worboys – email [worboys1968@yahoo.com.au](mailto:worboys1968@yahoo.com.au)**