NEWSLETTER NO 264



# Native Plants Queensland
## Cairns Branch

September 2026

## August Highlights

**Harvey Creek Excursion**
Helen Lawie

Our visit to a private property on 16 th August was not favoured by fine weather. Amid frequent showers and bursts of sunshine we toured a large house block bordered on two sides by Harvey Creek and one of its tributaries. The picturesque tributary looked like a Wet Tropics post card – cold rushing water, mossy stones, granite boulders and rainforest. The native trees were typical of this high rainfall region, covered in *Aspleniums* (Birds Nest Fern) and *Ophioderma pendulum* (Ribbon Fern), and vines such as *Eustrephus latifolius* (Wombat Berry).



***Pisonia grandis*** *Small banana shaped fruit are very sticky. Often seen on reef islands, distributed by sticking to birds.*

### Next Excursion

Daintree
19 September 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

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

### SGAP Library

Explore items available for loan here.


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| President | Tony Roberts | Publicity | Rachel Platte |
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In addition to the range of plants and trees we also enjoyed encountering two Zodiac Moths *Alcides zodiaca* or *A. metaurus*. Each was quite stationary and full of fresh bright colour, seemingly unaffected by the rain showers. They are incredibly common, but it did feel rare to see them so still, instead of their usual perpetual motion. Omphalea vines such as *Omphalea queenslandiae* are one of their host plants.

We also saw a pale shelled snail approx. 2cm in size. Due to the location of the eyes on the body of the snail (and not at the end of the antennae) most likely it is a White Rainforest Snail, *Noctepuna perlucidum.*

As we explored this pocket of rich diversity with our hosts, it was lovely to see the next generation growing up in the Wet Tropics. We walked around eating juicy apples and wondering about the trees and observing things large and very small in our surroundings.



***Neolitsea dealbata* and Zodiac Moth.** New growth was fawn coloured and plentiful. The soft furry leaves felt like puppy ears.

And, in possibly a first for a SGAP excursion, we collected two eggs from the chooks as well!



***Carallia brachiata*** Freshwater mangrove. Tiny flowers and fruit tucked right in amongst the leaves.



***Noctepuna perlucidum*** *White Rainforest Snail*

## Daintree Excursion

Sunday 20 September

*Location:* Daintree Wilderness Lodge (TBC - otherwise Mystery Tour of the Daintree led by Stuart).

*Meeting Point:* 8 am at Mossman Raintrees (Foxton Ave), near amenities, for a 8.15am departure.

Please consider carpooling to help split costs ($57 return ferry fee plus fuel).
Please RSVP to the secretary by Friday, September 18, indicating:

- If you will be making your own way there
- If you would like to carpool with others

**Conservation Status**
Sandy Watts

As I was preparing the plant profile for this edition (*Phaius australis*), I thought I best check its conservation status. Sadly, nothing has changed—it remains 'endangered'. The process, however, sent me down a rabbit hole of conservation status resources and where to find them.

In short, species protection is mapped out across both global and Australian systems. The most recognized international framework is the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List. While *P. australis* isn't registered on the IUCN list, it is formally listed under Australia's *EPBC Act*. The EPBC site takes some navigating but perhaps try the Queensland Government as a quick reference tool.

For anyone wanting to dive deeper, the Australian Museum provides a detailed overview.

**Watch this space!**

Friends of the Botanic Gardens (FOBG) recently reached out to see if we'd like to collaborate on a new project: developing a section of the gardens along Greenslopes Street. The focus will be on local native plants that people can grow in their own home gardens.

It's still early days, but following a preliminary discussion with FOBG, we've planned a site visit for later in the year. We look forward to sharing more details once plans take shape!



***Phaius australis***

# *Phaius australis*

Phaius (from Greek phaios, dusky)
Family: Orchidaceae







## About

Every spring, I wait in anticipation as my swamp orchid sends up a flower shoot that, over a few weeks, opens into a glorious, lightly scented bloom.

The swamp orchid is a fantastic addition to any garden, provided it receives plenty of moisture through regular watering or a self-watering pot.

While Phaius australis is relatively easy to grow and widely cultivated, it remains rare in the wild and is listed as endangered under the EPBC Act, with illegal collection posing its greatest threat.

## Occurence

Distributed across coastal swamp habitats from Cooktown, Queensland, to Lake Cathie, New South Wales.

## Propagation

Propagate by seed or by dividing established clumps.

The specimen photographed was initially purchased from Kuranda Enviro Care (with a proof of purchase certificate!), but has since been divided.

## In short

Herb
1 -2 m tall

Flowers: August - September

Fruit: Capsule 8 - 11 cm long

Notes: Grow as specimen flower or grouped together. Suited to gardens of any size, including smaller spaces.

Further reading:
ATRP
ALA
ANPSA