NEWSLETTER NO 265



Native Plants Queensland
Cairns Branch

October 2026

September Highlights

A day in the Daintree
Stuart Worboys

It's been many years since NPQ Cairns Branch has paid a visit north of the Daintree River. It's a long hike, and the ferry ticket is now $57, but it's worth reminding ourselves that the Daintree (the area between the Daintree River and the Bloomfield River) is the of the world's great botanical biodiversity hotspots.

First stop was the meeting point at Mossman where we admired the bottlebrush orchids (*Dendrobium smillieae*) flowering high in the town's famous raintrees (*Samanea saman*). From Mossman, it's another half hour to the Daintree Ferry. The seemingly neverending roadworks that dot north Queensland's highways and byways were evident here – the roads are being widenened for a new four-lane ferry.



Atractocarpus hirtus

Next Excursion

Cattana Wetlands
18 October 2026, 10am
Plant Identification Workshop

Discover the key characteristics of plants and and explore the resources available to help you identify them
rsvp: NPQ Facebook or secretary@sgapcairns.org.au

Don't forget to pay your branch AND regional fees so you can participate in excursions.

Upcoming Excursions

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

SGAP Library

Explore items available for loan here.

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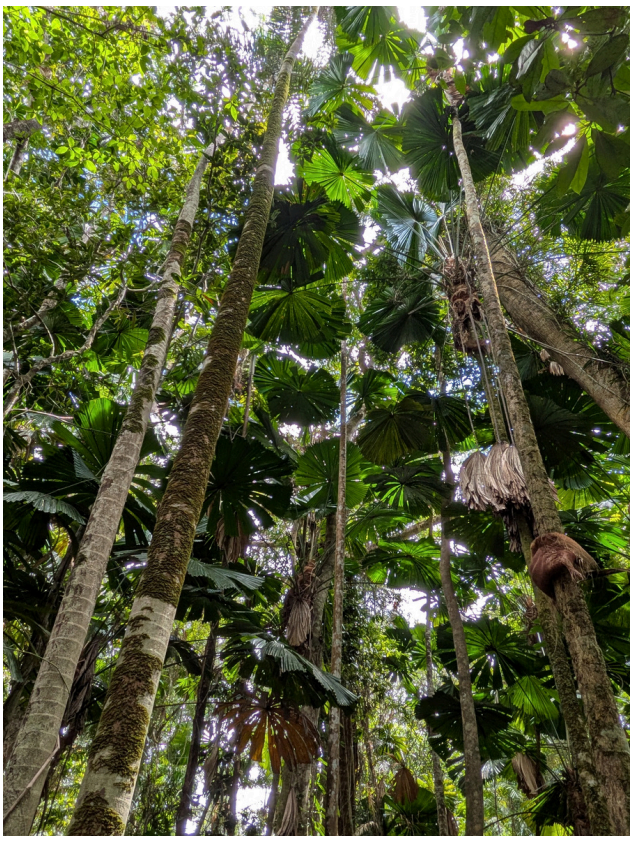
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The tall tropical trees that once shaded the approaches to the ferry crossing are now gone – cleared, bulldozed and replaced with asphalt. On the northern side, mangroves have also been cleared and enormous amounts of rock fill placed to widen the road. Douglas Shire Council advises the project is due for completion at the end of October.

Our next stop was Jindalba Board Walk, located on the northern side of the Alexandra Range. We only had 20 minutes here, long enough to spot a few species characteristic of the Daintree lowlands: black palm (*Normanbya normanbyi*), Noah's walnut (*Endiandra microneura*, restricted to the Daintree lowlands), Daintree satinash (*Syzygium monospermum*, a cauliflorous satinash with large yellow flowers and purple new growth), *Selaginella longipinna*, and hairy gardenia (*Atractrocarpus hirtus*). As we were leaving, we caught a glimpse of our first cassowary of the day – a brown juvenile.



A very tall *Lepidozamia hopei*



Fan palm forest

We travelled on to our destination – Daintree Wilderness Lodge. We'd had a long standing invitation from the owner to visit and check out the forest surrounding this small eco-resort. We were welcomed by the manager Sasha and his partner, who showed us around. The resort is built into lowland complex mesophyll vine forest that borders onto mesophyll vine forest with fan palms (*Licuala ramsayi*). During the wet season, the ground here is inundated for a couple of months, creating soil conditions that the fan palms love.

Sasha led us into the rainforest along a rough path. There was occasional evidence of 2023's Cyclone Jasper: fallen trees, thickets of wait-a-while (*Calamus* spp.) to catch unwary walkers, and areas of open canopy.

Growing in the trees were two species of hoya – *H. australis* and *H. pottsii*, both in flower. The huge bright orange flowers of *Freycinetia percostata* hung down from the trees in places. Growing in the gaps were tall arching stems of Australia's largest ginger, *Hornstedtia scottiana*, showing off their bird pollinated red flowers at the base of each stem. The trees here were tall and mostly impossible to identify. The spur mahogany (*Dysoxulum pettigrewianum*) was one standout though, with its strange contorted buttresses and pimply flakey bark. Scattered on the ground here and there were the enormous blue fruits of the cassowary plum (*Cerbera floribunda*) and the glossy white or pink porcelain fruits (*Fagraea cambagei*).

The ribbed, bright red berries of *Antirhea tenuiflora* were scattered on the forest floor. Juveniles of Bernie's tamarind (*Diploglottis bernieana*), a small tree with the largest compound leaves of any Australian Sapindaceae,



Hoya potsii



Symplocos cyanocarpa

were spotted on the track. We came to a small creek, where a pale-coloured snake was making its way through the cool water.

We returned to the resort, where we were plied with home-made banana and chocolate loaf (Sasha's partner is a trained French chef) – both key the ingredients obtained from rainforest fruit. While enjoying our snack, a cassowary and his striped chick passed by, also enjoying a snack of rainforest fruit.

From Daintree Wilderness Lodge, we drove down to Cow Bay beach for lunch, then made a quick visit to Turpentine Road to see some of the Daintree's rarest plants: *Xanthostemon formosus* (restricted to 5.4 km of creeks on granite geology), and *Syzygium glenum* (last count there were 20 trees found), and *Idiospermum australiense* (the idiot fruit, a tree with enormous seeds restricted to about 2300 hectares of lowland rainforest). From here, it was time to start the long drive home.