

Banksia Bytes

Native Plants Sunshine Coast



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Native Plants Queensland

Newsletter

March 2019 Number 18

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From the Editor

*What a strange summer we are having on the Sunshine Coast - rain in December, beautiful weather for Christmas, lowest January rainfall on record, hot steamy days in February and topped off with the threat of a cyclone! I hope no one suffered any damage from the winds off cyclone Oma. We lost a few wattles on our bush block but as Spencer puts it in his profile on acacias on page 3, they are useful as rotting timber. In our garden the *Stenocarpus sinuatus* (wheel of fire) flowers are lighting up the tree and the quandong, *Elaeocarpus grandis*, is starting to flower, attracting the rainbow lorikeets in numbers (and noise). May autumn be more conducive to gardening and bring relief to our fellow Queenslanders who have suffered so much in the north and west of the state in recent times.*



Wendy

Dates for your Diary

Sunday 10 March: 9.00 am A&E Centre, Maroochy Botanic Gardens, Tanawha. "Fascinating Facts: Science meets Nature" with Ian McMaster, Hilary Pearl, Brittany Elliott, and Garry Thomas. Morning tea \$5, supplied by the Friends of the Gardens.

Saturday 16 March: 10.00am NPQ Autumn Gathering at Kingaroy. Details NPQ Journal - March

Sunday 14 April: NPSC walk in Triunia National Park led by Jacqueline Nolan, SCC Natural Areas officer.



Triunia robusta

Photo: G.Miller

Saturday May 11: 9.00-3.00 NPQ Autumn Plant Sale, Grovely TAFE, Woking St, Keperra

Sunday May 12: NPSC walk at Ewen Maddock dam with Kenneth McClymont, Sunshine Coast Council.



May 25: Birdlife Sunshine Coast seminar with NPSC display

Sunday May 26: 8.30am-12.30pm Natives Naturally: "Small is Beautiful" Maroochy Botanic Gardens, Tanawha. Jerry Coleby-Williams (on Cottage Gardens), Anne Windsor and Karen Shaw from NPSC will be doing presentations/workshops. NPSC will have a display.



For Information about outings contact....

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Adorable Acacias

By Spencer Shaw



Mim O'Saceae the famous Irish botanist was once quoted as saying "Acacia are the potatoes of the tree kingdom, providing sustenance to whole ecosystems" ... Never a truer word was spoken in jest.

Life in Australia without acacias would be pretty bleak. These fast growing, soil improving, carbon collecting, fast food outlets for fauna, well and truly get the ecological ball rolling in all of Australia's many and varied ecosystems.

Acacias are too often a much-maligned genus for either their tendency to grow too quickly and thus be a weed in the paddock or their tendency to fall down after 5-15 years of phenomenal growth in the garden.

These apparently negative traits in human eyes are, however, the wattle trees niche in the greater scheme of things. They have evolved to take advantage of the regular disturbance or even catastrophe of fire in Australia and to take advantage of the disturbance and catastrophe that European settlement has brought. What we must learn to do is harness the tremendous vegetative energy of the wattle, allow them to improve soils, halt erosion and create ecological diversity, and to see their phenomenally quick growth, leaf litter, and all that dead and rotting wood they produce as the great benefits that they are.

Acacias belong to the Leguminosae Family (syn. Mimosaceae) and are a legume. Legumes supply a nice cosy home in nodules on their roots for specific bacteria that convert nitrogen present in the air into a form the acacia can use as food. This gives acacias the edge in colonising degraded nutrient impoverished soils.

Back in 2005 we almost lost the genus name Acacia in Australia, when the bulk of our Aussie species almost became *Racosperma*. However, due to some high-level botanical / political machinations, a new type was chosen for the genus and Australia kept Acacia, which, although dubious scientifically, has saved us a lot of trouble when it comes to revising name changes for such a genus, containing close to 1000 species in Australia.

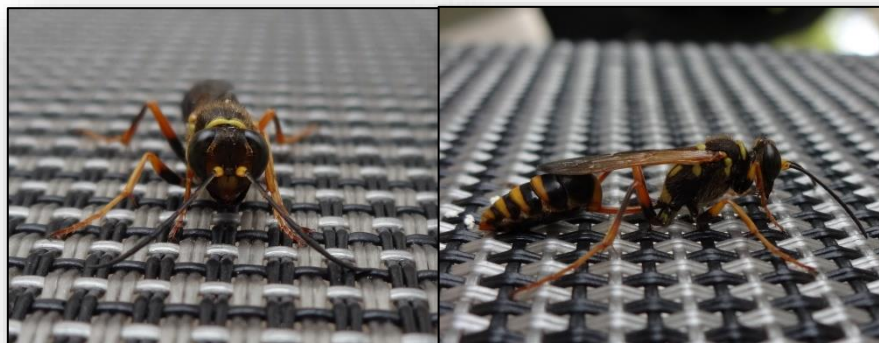
All acacias produce a bean-like pod that is ripe when it dries and then splits. The seeds are also like beans but smaller black, grey, or brown and very hard. Please don't be tempted to test this hardness with your teeth - the seed will win! A fleshy, oily aril sits on one side of the seed and provides incentive for birds and ants to disperse them.

Plant an acacia now and enjoy its shade next year!



STINGY, THE MUD DAUBER WASP By Deb Mooney

Recently, we have been watching a mud dauber wasp build clay pots on our walls and today they started to hatch from the top. Ever curious, the man of the house was fiddling with one cell and unfortunately dropped it. The pot broke causing the baby wasp inside his translucent capsule to wake up and break out of it. I think that he is a bit premature as his brother immediately flew off but he has been hanging around on the chair. We gave him a glob of honey and he lapped it up. He will be overnighing in a jar inside as the ants are ferocious here and have already had a go at him when he first landed on the floor. What an entrance to this world...



I researched this wasp and discovered that they are solitary, non-aggressive unless they're bothered, and can help with bug control. The mother wasp packs a spider lunch into each clay pot for the babies to eat while they're developing. The adults also feed on nectar, helping the beleaguered bees with pollination. I was surprised to see how hairy he was on closer inspection.

P.S. The good news is that after overnighing in the jar indoors, he seemed to gain strength and was soon on his way. When I see a wasp now, I wonder if it's him.

A Plant that keeps on Flowering

This plant, *Medicosma cunninghamii*, just keeps on flowering. It produces seed capsules but I haven't seen any seed – either they fall out very quickly or there are no seeds in the capsule.



Wild Lime (*Citrus australis*)

by Eric Anderson



On our group's recent excursion to Kerrie and Richard Lonn's property at Bald Knob I discovered a native citrus plant - Wild Lime (*Citrus australis*). I was familiar with Lime Bush (*Citrus glauca*) from western Queensland and the rainforest inhabiting Native Finger Lime (*C. australasica*), but this thorny tree about 9 m tall standing in the open on the edge of the rainforest was new to me. It had some erect stems with densely crowded branches. The dense, prickly habit makes this species a useful nesting site for small birds, as evidenced by the presence of a Red-browed Finch's nest. Also present were some roundish, knobbly fruit 4-6 cm in diameter.

Wild Lime occurs naturally on the fringe of lowland sub-tropical rainforests of southeast Qld, north from the Beenleigh district to the Gympie area. If you look up Mr Google you will find it under a range of common names such as Round Lime, Australian Lime, Australian Round Lime, Gympie Lime, and Dooja. Apparently, it is suitable for including in cordials, sauces, marmalades and lime flavouring. The skin is very thick (up to 7mm) and has potential for culinary use, such as grating into spice pastes or for candied peel, and may also have potential for essential oil extraction.



This could be a useful local plant worth trying in our gardens.



Small and isolated habitat patches crucial to species survival

From the Threatened Species Research News:

Small local patches of bushland are playing a much bigger role in conserving biodiversity than previously thought, according to a new global study. The study looked at the conservation values of vegetation patches in 27 countries on four continents, including Australia, and considered their size and distance to other habitat. Small and isolated patches of vegetation have generally been treated as not very important to conservation, however the study found that small and isolated habitat areas are very important to the survival of many rare and endangered species.

“It’s good to know that the work of community groups in conserving and restoring small patches of habitats in their local neighbourhood is a thoroughly worthwhile activity”, said Professor Wintle.



Russell Family Park

Beautiful fungi



Despite the dry weather these lovely fungi appeared in the garden.



Latest news from the **Wild Pollinator Count**

Spring 2018: Results are in!

We broke all our count records! Just over 600 observations of more than 6700 insects were submitted to Wild Pollinator Count from 182 unique locations. We covered all states and territories, except the Northern Territory.

European honey bees were the most commonly observed insect, with flies coming in second. Flies are important pollinators of many plants, including some plant species that aren’t pollinated effectively by European honey bees. It’s great to see them feature in our Wild Pollinator Counts!

Insect group	Number of observations
European honey bees	2836
Native bees	1045
Beetles	1017
Butterflies & Moths	294
Flies	1401
European wasps	36
Native wasps	108

Just over half (53%) of the observations were on exotic plants, the remainder on native plants. Most exotic plants submitted with recorded insect observations were common garden plants and herbs: roses, lavender, salvia, nasturtium, basil, coriander, sage and thyme. Commonly recorded native plants included grevilleas, callistemons, kunzeas, eucalypts, bluebells, hibbertias and dianellas.

The next count will be in April 2019. We count twice a year to cover seasonal changes in pollinator communities – we hope you count with us regularly so you notice these changes over time in your local patch!

Backyard Monitoring by Wendy Johnston



We have been monitoring a small spring-fed pool regularly for a long time. This February we saw kookaburras using the pool for the first time. And they love it! They are media tarts, totally uninhibited about appearance. Is it the hot weather?



Creating Habitat in Your Garden, Mary Cairncross NP, December 2018

On a damp December morning 50 people gathered at the theartrette in Mary Cairncross.

A group armed with umbrellas explored the rainforest with Spencer, stopping to hear about special trees and their adaptation to their changing environment. We started with a very old shrub (*Eupomatia laurina*) and finished at a tree with some very young robin nestlings.

Michael Fox, from Pollinator Link, showed us his vision to link green spaces through backyard gardens, utilising otherwise unused patches of land and encouraging apartment dwellers to have verandah and rooftop gardens equipped with bird boxes – sounds wonderful.

Jill Fechner, from Reptiles Rehabilitation, described the ideal ‘messy’ garden for reptiles and their efforts to rescue and rehabilitate damaged reptiles.

Jono Hooper, from the Queensland Frog Society, showed us some of the local frogs and their calls, and how we can encourage them into our gardens.

Anne Windsor gave us an insight into the wonderful world of water gardens and the wildlife they attract. She followed this up with a demonstration of how to grow and care for water plants in your own ponds.

We were treated to a fine morning tea and the big hamper raffle was drawn.





Outing to Bald Knob, February 2019

A large group of us gathered at the home of Kerrie and Richard Lonn to enjoy the wonderful outlook and marvel at their dedication and tenacity in revegetating their block. It is revegetating with an emphasis on wind protection. We went for a walk to the forest area and plantings. Their staged plantings look really enthusiastic and one can imagine in less than 10 years they will have blended seamlessly into the existing forest. After a fine morning tea we settled in for the AGM.



AGM 2019

The newly elected executive is

President: Spencer Shaw

Secretary: Anne Windsor

Treasurer: Joan Abercrombie



The appointed officers (events coordinator, website manager, excursions organiser, raffle organiser, and newsletter editor) remain the same.

The members expressed thanks to Marie for the time and energy she has put into the branch as past secretary and setting up our protocols for the future.

Yabba 2022 proposal: After a lengthy discussion, it was decided that a timeframe document produced by the NPQ President be circulated so that NPSC members could consider if Sunshine Coast Branch are willing to undertake organizing Yabba 2022. Those willing to be on an organizing committee need to express their interest to the President, Spencer Shaw, and a decision must be made at the Branch meeting on April 14 2019.

For sale:

A hanging basket stand which is no longer required by NPSC. It has been used at a number of displays but has never been in permanent use and has been stored in a secure shed.

It cost \$99 in 2016.

Baskets not included

Enquiries to Marie npscevents@bigpond.com

Make an offer to the Treasurer:

Joan Abercrombie

joan.abercrombie@skymesh.com.au



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