

Banksia Bytes

Native Plants Sunshine Coast

www.npqsuncoast.org



Native Plants Queensland



Newsletter

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From the Editor

What an amazing summer! I hope you have all survived the drought, bushfires, floods and COVID-19. We travelled out west in January and the countryside was brown, dusty and all plant growth was looking miserable, and we wondered whether it would ever recover. Come 2 weeks ago on a similar journey, the cattle were almost lost in the lush long grass! Rain is wonderful. I have never seen the west so green. We were showing the central western country to our Canadian son-in-law and I think he has now a very abnormal idea of the Qld outback.

*However, the rain has brought lots of new growth to our shrubs and revitalised a rather tired-looking garden. While the bunya pine produced no cones (very unusual for that tree), the *Elaeocarpus grandis* trees flowered magnificently and attracted large flocks of rainbow lorikeets. Even though deafening, the birds were wonderful. They even competed with the very noisy family of young and old kookaburras who claim our territory. The rain has also seen an explosion of butterflies and to an extent snakes as described in Joan's article, while Anne's snake vine has attracted some interesting critters. No cassowaries though, so plant a tree from Spencer's list.*



Wendy

Dates for your Diary

Due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19, events in the foreseeable future for NPQSC have been cancelled.

Congratulations to our secretary, Karen Shaw, who won an award for an outstanding volunteer in the Glasshouse electorate.

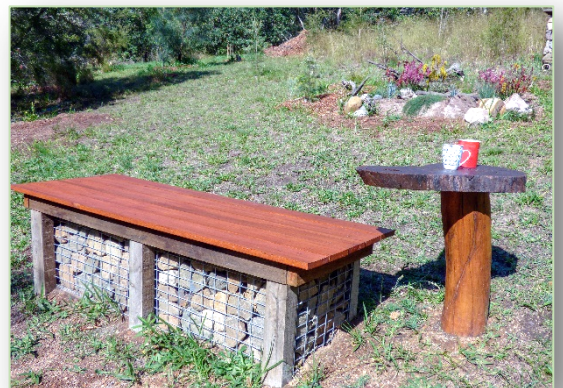
Karen Shaw was nominated by Maleny Commerce as their outstanding volunteer. Karen has worked tirelessly for several years as the chamber's secretary and on many projects, the biggest being the Maleny Christmas Festival that she has coordinated on behalf of the chamber for the past six years.



Happy Birthday Olive

We wish you a very happy 90th birthday Olive. We hope you have settled into your new home and are still enjoying your garden.

A garden habitat seat – rocks for the critters and a seat and coffee table for the humans. By Mike Donovan



The Bee Garden at Beerburrum

Sunshine Coast Council has developed a native bee garden with native beehives in Beerburrum. Thanks to Ann Ross from Hive Haven, NPSC had an opportunity to suggest some local native plants. Not all our ideas were accepted, but all the NSW plants were eliminated.



In July 2019 the garden was established and it struggled through the drought, with some help from Ann.

The hives are now installed and the plants are coming along nicely since that the rain has arrived.

This is supposed to be the first in a series of native bee gardens to be established across the Sunshine Coast.



Big Fruit a Big Gamble?

By Spencer Shaw



Whilst recently taking a guided walk at Mary Cairncross and showing the participants the rare *Syzygium hodgkinsoniae* – Red Lillypilly, which bears a fruit up to 60mm in diameter, I was reminded of some of the large fleshy fruits that call our rainforests home.

Rainforest ecosystems are relatively stable but also highly competitive environments. The forest floor is often a shady place and tiny seedlings often have little chance of survival eg there is no survival of eucalypts or pioneer species seedlings on an undisturbed rainforest floor. Larger seed, however, quickly develop into larger seedlings that have a much better chance of survival. In an undisturbed rainforest understorey with a canopy in excess of 20m, seed need to be on average no smaller than 5mm in diameter to survive as a seedling e.g. many native laurels.

But if you produce a seed that is too heavy to be blown around, how do you spread your seed? Well for starters, you can wrap it in some gaudy colour that attracts certain members of the local fauna

population and if you are feeling really generous you might chuck in some nutritional value for good measure. If you can encourage the local fauna into spreading your seed by wrapping it in a fruit, then the main limiting factor to how big your seed can then be is the size of the mouth or beak of the said fauna. Like I said before, the bigger the seed you can produce the better your seedling's chances of survival in the competitive environment of the forest floor. But these evolutionary adaptations to produce larger fruit could also leave you very vulnerable if the fauna that spreads your seed disappears – and this is what happened in Northern New South Wales and SouthEast Queensland rainforests. Megafauna such as Cassowaries are estimated to have survived in the rainforests of our region until at least the last ice age, but have since disappeared.

Of the twenty or so remaining species of plants in our region (Nth NSW & SE QLD) that produce a fruit in excess of 30mm in diameter approximately half are endangered or very limited in their distribution. Their ability to spread themselves has been severely curtailed with the loss of the large fruit eaters and their only means of spread now is along watercourses or by bouncing down hillsides, or us!

So give some thought to the survival of our larger fruiting flora and find a space for them in your reveg or even your regen site.

Some of our larger Fruiting Trees from the Blackall Range:

<i>Castanospora alphandii</i>	Brown Tamarind
<i>Endiandra compressa</i>	White Bark
<i>Endiandra pubens</i>	Hairy Walnut
<i>Endiandra lowiana</i>	Sunshine Coast Apple
<i>Gmelina leichardtii</i>	White Beech
<i>Lepidozamia peroffskyana</i>	Shinning Burrawang
<i>Planchonella australis</i>	Black Apple
<i>Planchonella eerwah</i>	Shiny-Leaved Coondoo
<i>Planchonella pohlmaniana</i>	Yellow Boxwood
<i>Siphondon australe</i>	Ivorywood
<i>Syzygium hodgkinsoniae</i>	Red Lillypilly



Signs of hope

By Wendy Johnston

While on Kangaroo Island working in the dismal landscape of burnt country, a storm came across and within a few days the eucalypt trunks were frilled with new growth and bracken fern gave life to the black earth.



Check these out:

<https://myplantlifebalance.com.au/>

Full of interesting information about plant trends and it does include some information on native plants.

“1 in 4 Australians have purchased a native plant in the past 12 months. Almost 1 in 3 have bought a water efficient species”

“Retail nurseries report enquiries have almost doubled for native plants in the past twelve months, while enquiries on drought-resilient species were up 70 % by those surveyed”

Native Plant Project is Victorian based <https://nativeplantproject.com.au/> It has an e-mag and e-nursery. The project was initiated by “a team of native plant enthusiasts, eager to share their beauty with gardeners and garden lovers everywhere”. It currently has 11,300 followers. An interesting feature is that each image shows the number of likes. The True Blue Garden is spectacular – definitely worth a look.

Gardens for Wildlife

By Joan Dillon

When walking up the drive last week, I noticed a very healthy, approx. 2m long black snake adjacent to my GfW sign. Clearly it got the message. This week it had migrated into my work area where the concrete floor was nice and warm and it was wet outside. This snake knew a thing or two.

Black snakes are not a problem, so long as they are not stepped on, when they become justifiably annoyed. I suggested that it move aside while I retrieved some tools, which it obligingly did. Tools retrieved, I also suggested that it might like to put up a sign should it go out for the day. Probably a bit much to ask.



Black snake



Tree snake

Next, wheelbarrow loaded with tools etc. I started down the path only to notice another 2m reptile (brown this time) wrapped around the mesh wall against which the tools hang. Careful, and not too close examination revealed that this was a tree snake that had been using the wire to help shed its skin, and possibly to keep out of the way of the black snake.

The tree snake will wander off and no doubt return when it's skin shedding time again, as they often do. There's even a skin draped across the office book shelves

at the moment. I'll need to be vigilant re the black snake but it's large and very black so shouldn't be too hard to spot.

So, unless it's a brown snake and should therefore be given a very wide berth, most snakes are part of the scenery in a GfW garden. They will tend to eat the frogs and hopefully not the toads and can definitely provide some unexpected entertainment.

The Story of a humble Snake Vine *Stephania japonica*

By Anne Windsor

It's not the most exciting vine you'll ever see. Mine is a female and bears inconspicuous clusters of small white flowers in spring-summer. However, she does have clusters of brightly coloured red and orange fruit, and peltate, almost heart-shaped, vibrant green leaves. And she certainly is vigorous.

I have also discovered, since the recent rain, that this vine is a host to some fascinating beasts. First are the gigantic caterpillars of the Fruit-piercing Moth, *Eudocima fullonia*. The caterpillars, 6-9cm long, are beautifully marked, with two giant eye spots to deter predators.

They are feasting in numbers on the vine right now.



Caterpillar of *Eudocema fullonia*

In defensive posture



Stephania japonica Snake Vine

The second creature living on the vine is a very weird little thing, only about 6mm long. It is the larva of *Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*, a beetle called the Mealybug Destroyer. It is a member of the ladybird family. The adult is a small black beetle with a reddish-yellow head, and it is so good at destroying mealybugs that it was imported into the USA to defend their citrus crops.

As if that wasn't enough hospitality provided by the vine, I also spotted a Praying Mantis egg case, and a clutch of Lacewing eggs.



Larva of *Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*

Snake Vine, what a useful plant. You're not so humble any more!



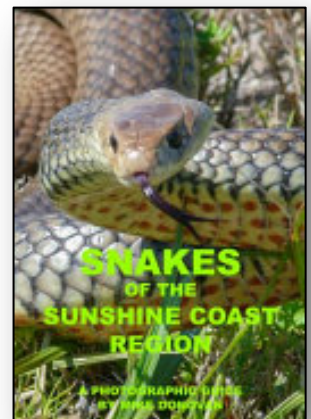
Praying Mantis Egg Case



Lacewing Eggs

Mike Donovan is a photographer specialising in reptiles and amphibians and focusing on the south east Queensland area, in particular the Sunshine Coast region where he has been based for the past 30 odd years. He has written and self-published a book entitled “**Snakes of the Sunshine Coast Region**” which is a photographic guide for any Sunshine Coast resident to enable easy identification and hopefully foster understanding of all of the snakes they are likely to encounter in our region. He also has two other books in the pipeline, “**Amphibians of South East Queensland**” and “**Reptiles and Amphibians of South East Queensland**”.

One of his aims is “To offer up his accumulated knowledge and experience as proof that it really is worth taking the time to check out the small things and admire the breathtaking beauty that is all around us”.



What benefits from the long spell of dry hot weather?

By Marie Livingston

Eugenia reinwardtiana thrived.

Since 2002 this *Eugenia reinwardtiana* plant has survived on the SE side of the house at Peachester where it lives in dappled shade. It never gets supplementary water or care!

Myrtle rust has never completely taken hold and the plant fights back at every opportunity. This drought gave it an opportunity to thrive – it flowered and set fruit.

The new growth is still mostly myrtle rust free but some of the fruit is already hit. Some new and old fruit are damaged but there are still a few undamaged fruit and one seed looks to have grown to a good size. This seed has probably been sacrificed to photography! Early February and one bright red fruit fell to the ground – the sole survivor.

Every day of humidity sees the myrtle rust increase but this plant has proven it is tough. Hopefully it will survive to celebrate its 20th birthday.



Eugenia reinwardtiana fruit on plant



Ripe fruit



Fruits



New growth

iNaturalist

Review by Nick Swanson

Just about anyone will find iNaturalist (iNat) useful, from the novice wanting to learn more about the flora and fauna around them, to professional ecologists wanting to record what they've seen.

The app enables people to upload observations of plants and animals to the iNat database for everyone to see. If you don't know what you've taken a photo of it doesn't matter, because the rest of the iNat community is there to help provide identification. Your observation can also contribute to science because once two users have identified the specimen it gets classed as 'research grade' and is automatically uploaded to the Atlas of Living Australia.

The best part about the app is how easy it is to use so anyone with a smartphone can upload an observation within seconds. The app uses the geotag data on the photo to determine the location so all you need to do is select the photo to upload, identify the species (if known) and then submit. There's also a function that allows users to make an observation 'obscured' or 'private' if preferred, however this can also be made visible to selected users.



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