

# Banksia Bytes

## Native Plants Sunshine Coast



[www.npqsuncoast.org](http://www.npqsuncoast.org)

**Native Plants Queensland**

## Newsletter

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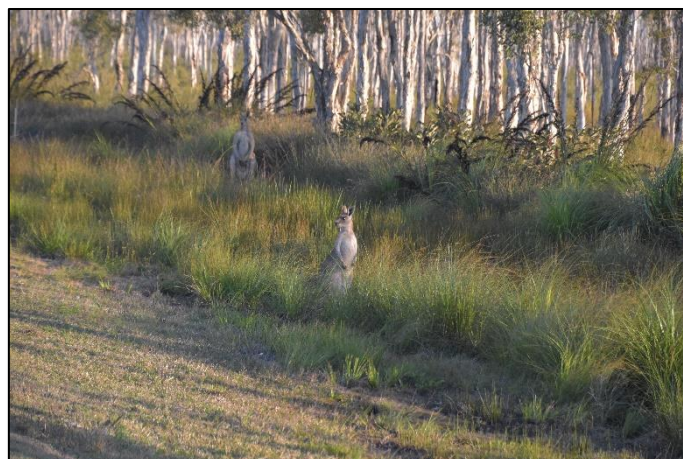
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From the editor

I hope you are all enjoying spring in the gardens and in the natural environment. There are plenty of wildflowers blooming on the Sunshine Coast just waiting to be admired.

In this issue Joan discusses fashion, experimentation and observation for some of our rare and pretty native plants, while Spencer invites us to think more broadly about the 'Laurel' family when having our smashed avocado on toast.

Wendy



## The program for the next few months of 2021

Due to the volatility of the COVID-19 situation, our program will be advertised as the time gets closer.



However, if you haven't been to look at our local wildflowers, there may still be time. Here are just a few of the locals we saw at Bribie Island.





## Fashion Experiment Observation by Joan Dillon

Some years ago, I came across a small free-flowering shrub, an *Eriostemon* called 'Star Sprite'. It grew very well with irrigation and occasionally produced a seedling. I assumed it was from 'down south' and it then disappeared from retail outlets. Fashion is a feature of the nursery industry so never assume that what you like this year, will still be available next year.

Fast forward to this year and enter *Philotheca difformis*, the same plant, found along the east coast and growing in the bush around Mapleton! Spencer has been propagating it. This year I decided to try it in my basalt colluvium and so far, it is doing very well on a slope with minimum drainage water. Watered at planting but rarely since. It was worth experimenting with it in the soil and observing the result. It has a long flowering season with a pause in early spring when it puts on more apple-green aromatic foliage. The perfect shrub for a small garden and it is local.



Also on the experimental front are two species of *Conostylis*. One has grey-green foliage and the other bright green leaves with prickly edges. These were seen in parks around Perth and are endemic to southwest WA. The latter appears to be hardier in my soils and is again a great small garden/rockery/border plant. Both have clusters of bright yellow flowers at the end of flowering stems and add colour to my 'new' garden.

The 'new' garden is experimental, and some plants have died, a learning experience. They may do better in a different soil type but that's up to others to try. Without experimenting, we never find out.

## **Grevillea 'White Candelabra'** by Joan Dillon

I came across this grevillea at a Logan Branch plant sale. It was a small plant and not flowering but the foliage was unusual so, naturally, it was worth trying. It is a form of *Grevillea banksii*, supposedly growing to about 3m., with a narrow, pencil shaped habit and adapted to soils quite unlike mine. Hence the use of the word "supposedly". Belief in plant labels can be an unreliable guide. It is developing into an attractive large shrub down in the back paddock on basalt colluvium. Some members may already grow it.

It may of course be "out of fashion" as ads on Google are several years old. Since it's close to my *Grevillea hodgei*, any seeds produced now by the latter will probably/possibly be hybrids. I'll have to wait to find out.



## **Boronia keysii** by Joan Dillon



This boronia from the wallum is occasionally available and worth buying. At present it appears to be the only local species which can be propagated, although not for want of trying. It is vulnerable and restricted to the Noosa River plain area. Grown in a well-drained sandy potting mix, it will grow and flower prolifically in a large pot with a regular water supply. Drainage and sunshine could be described as the keys to success. It will grow in the ground but is easily shaded out and does not survive. A different and attractive display plant with a long flowering period but like many wallum species the maximum display is in spring. Experimenting is definitely worth the effort.



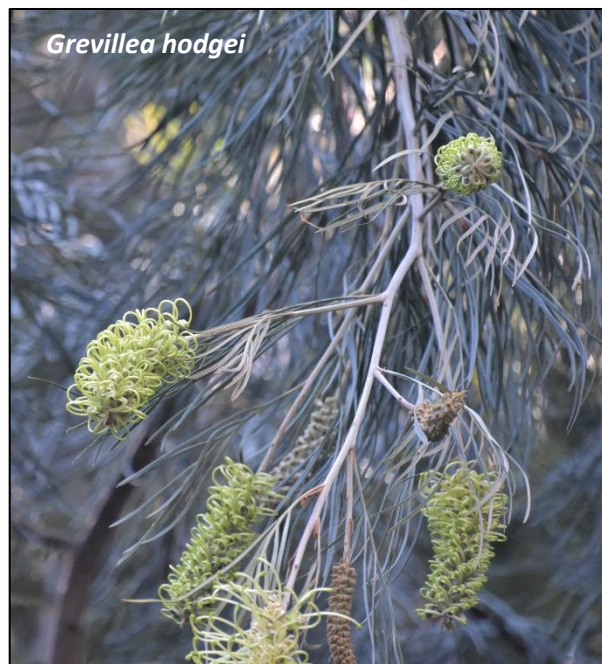
## **Grevillea hodgei** by Joan Dillon

Members may remember that when it was likely that one of the few remaining habitats for this plant on Rupari Hill was about to be cleared for a communication tower, I think, Chrissie and Ian collected some cuttings. One of these survived and was entrusted to my care when they went on holiday. What a responsibility!

It sat in the shadehouse for quite a while doing absolutely nothing and then to my relief, started to grow. Once it got its act together it really grew, and the next challenge was where to plant it. Rupari Hill has very different soil. However, the only spot available was on a slope in the back paddock. It has survived and thrived, developing into a large shrub. Spencer also has one on the edge of the Forest Heart parking area. It is hard pruned each year. A seedling appeared in the shadehouse floor after it produced one inflorescence prior to transplanting and that is also growing vigorously in the back paddock.

It is currently known from 3 small populations comprising under 250 mature individuals and is critically endangered. Unfortunately, it cross breeds readily with *Grevillea banksii* so the genetics of my plants is unknown, although the flowers and foliage are somewhat different.

Ex situ conservation?



## Lauraceae of Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve by Spencer Shaw

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August I was pleased to present my second family based plant discussion for the volunteers of Mary Cairncross. Earlier this year we talked Myrtaceae, the Myrtle Family, but this time it was one of my favourite families. Let's be honest. I love all things green, but for this moment in time it's the Lauraceae, the Laurel Family.

Lauraceae is named for a single species *Laurus nobilis*, the 'True' Laurel or Bay Laurel, that occurs in Europe the home of our scientific nomenclature / naming system. This, in retrospect, could be seen to overstate the importance of the 'True' Laurel, as it very much appears to be an outlier of the great diversity Lauraceae present in the tropics and subtropics around the globe and in particular Australasia. From my research, figures vary widely but it's estimated there are approximately 44-52 Genera and between 2500-3500 species, currently ...

Generally, members of the Lauraceae family are woody trees and shrubs, except for the Genus *Cassytha*, the Dodder Laurels, which are slender hemi-parasitic vines and add considerable diversity to the ecology of this family. No *Cassytha* species have been recorded in MCSR as yet, but they would only be living in the canopy, so may be present and yet to be recorded. Globally Lauraceae are generally evergreen, but in those areas where they have spread into temperate zones, some species have evolved to be deciduous. All our local species in subtropical Australia are evergreen. Leaf arrangement is generally alternate, although in species of *Neolitsea*, leaves are arranged in pseudo-whorls (leaves arranged in clusters on the stem, the clusters



separated by regular intervals, usually produced behind a scaly resting bud). It would appear that fruit types are consistent across the Family, being drupes (one seeded fruit). One of our favourites is the Avocado, *Persea americana*. Other species of culinary or commercial importance to western culture include Bay Leaf – *Laurus nobilis*, Cinnamon - *Cinnamomum zeylanicum* and of course Camphor Laurel - *Cinnamomum camphora*.

Although timelines vary widely, study of Lauraceae appears to agree that it is a particularly ancient family, originating early in the evolution of flowering plants. The family would appear to be Gondwanan in

origin, and in particular, Australasia being a centre for early diversification. In Australia 130 species from 8 Genera are recorded as native. The 8 native Genera are *Beilschmiedia*, *Cassytha*, *Cinnamomum*, *Cryptocarya*, *Endiandra*, *Lindera*, *Litsea* and *Neolitsea*. A recent addition to Lauraceae genera that are present in Australia is *Persea*, due to Avocado's escaping from plantations! A far more widespread naturalised plant / weed from the Lauraceae is of course the Camphor Laurel, *Cinnamomum camphora*. Both loved and loathed, but far from a threat to our remaining rainforests as it primarily colonises degraded grazing and horticultural country. In Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve we have recorded 19 native species from 6 of the native Genera, which is pretty impressive to think that our little 55ha remnant contains 15% of the species of Australia's Lauraceae!





Lauraceae are a particularly valuable food source for our native pigeons and a host of other birds, with many of the Lauraceae species fruiting for a month or two each and different species fruiting at different periods throughout the year. The skins and often thin flesh surrounding the seeds and require many fruits to be eaten (or at least digested in the crop and then seed regurgitated) to provide enough sustenance for the birds. Hence, many of these trees are particularly abundant in their cropping. Trees such as *Cryptocarya erythroxylon* and *C. glaucescens* are abundant in their fruiting and carry their fruit above the foliage allowing easy

access to the flighty flock or Topknot Pigeon, *Lopholaimus antarcticus*. On the other hand (or should I say branch) the fruit of species such as *Litsea australis* and *Neolitsea dealbata* are located on younger branches, hidden under foliage and more likely to be consumed by secretive birds such as the Superb Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus superbus*, or Wompoo Pigeon, *Ptilinopus magnifica*. Some of largest fruit that can be found in Mary Cairncross come from the genus *Endiandra*, with *Endiandra compressa* – flat black fruit to 60mm, *Endiandra lowiana* – round red or yellow fruit to 60mm, and *Endiandra pubens* – round red fruit to 60mm, all being recorded. These large fruits are certainly too big for any of our native birds to eat and now

rely on gravity and water courses for dispersal, but in deep time would have been spread by the megafauna that once used to roam these rainforests.



So next time you are enjoying your Avocado on toast, remember to thank the amazing Lauraceae family for its tasty fruit both to us and native birds.

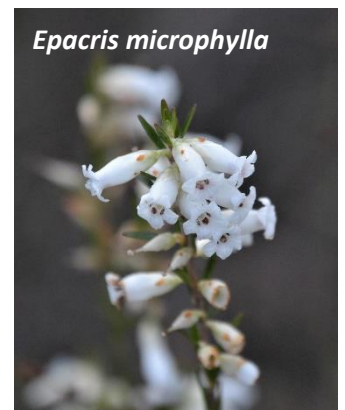
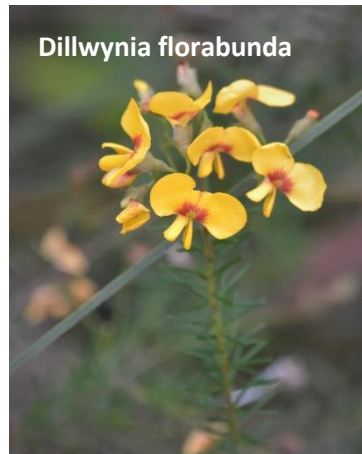
Genus and Species	Common Name	Form
<i>Beilschmiedia elliptica</i>	Grey Walnut	Tree
<i>Beilschmiedia obtusifolia</i>	Blush Walnut	Tree
<i>Cinnamomum oliverii</i>	Oliver's sassafras	Tree
<i>Cryptocarya erythroxylon</i>	Pigeonberry Ash	Tree
<i>Cryptocarya glaucescens</i>	Jackwood	Tree
<i>Cryptocarya laevigata</i>	Glossy Laurel	Tree
<i>Cryptocarya macdonaldii</i>	Bill's Laurel	Tree

<i>Cryptocarya obovata</i>	Pepperberry	Tree
<i>Cryptocarya sclerophylla</i>	Hardleaf Laurel	Tree
<i>Cryptocarya triplinervis</i>	Three-veined <i>Cryptocarya</i>	Tree
<i>Endiandra compressa</i>	White Bark	Tree
<i>Endiandra discolor</i>	Rose Walnut	Tree
<i>Endiandra lowiana</i>	Sunshine Coast Walnut	Tree
<i>Endiandra muelleri</i>	Green Walnut	Tree
<i>Endiandra pubens</i>	Hairy Walnut	Tree
<i>Litsea australis</i>	Brown Bolly Gum	Tree
<i>Litsea leefeana</i>	Brown Bolly Gum	Tree
<i>Litsea reticulata</i>	Bolly Gum	Tree
<i>Neolitsea dealbata</i>	White bollygum	Tree





## Some wildflowers seen in Mooloolah River NP



## Flannel Flowers



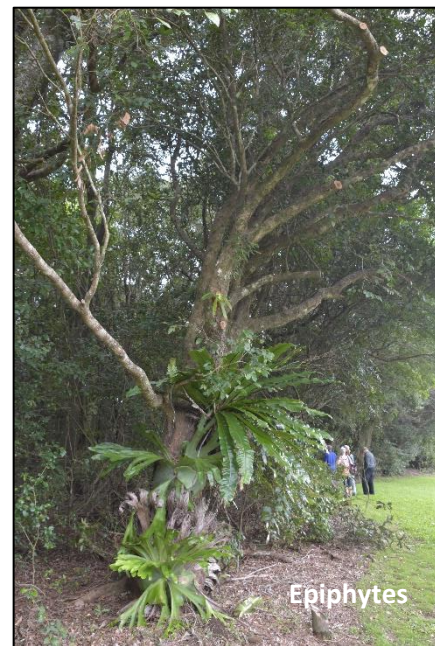
Flannel flowers have sprung up in great numbers south of Port Macquarie this spring. It is the combined result of drought, followed by a severe wildfire in late 2019, and then heavy rains, leading to flooding in many areas earlier this year. The drought and fires caused all those plants in the canopy to drop their leaves so the sun could come in and hit the ground and let the seeds germinate once the rains came. The plants have reached up to 1.5m – quite extraordinary and not seen for many years.



## Excursion to Doig Reserves, May 2021

Article by Robert Price

Mothers and others from NPSC assembled on Mother's Day for a well-attended walk led by Eric Anderson at William Doig and Andrew Doig Parks, Kureelipa. Also attending were two members of the Murray Grey Drive Bushcare Group, Jocelyn and Ben, who tirelessly weed, revegetate and maintain these council reserves. Jocelyn was able to give us a rundown on the history of the area, from cane farming to cattle grazing and rural subdivision, and Eric explained the geology and topography which caused the dominance of dry rainforest species in the locality. A track passes through William Doig Park, allowing the group to examine, beneath the fairly low canopy, understorey plants such as *Cryptocarya laevigata* (Red Fruited Laurel), *Everistia vacciniifolia* (Small-leaved Canthium), *Atractocarpus chartaceus* (Narrow-leaved Gardenia) and a Sickie Fern, *Pellaea nana*. A small prickly plant I was unfamiliar with was correctly identified by Jocelyn as Barbwire Weed, in fact not a weed but *Nyssanthes diffusa*.



At the end of the track where the forest finishes is a mown strip of grass which affords a good look at the forest edge with foliage to the ground. Growing here was a tree with particularly glossy foliage we couldn't place at the time but which I now believe is *Arytera distylis* (Twin-leaf Coogera). Another unidentified small tree we encountered, with slightly toothed leaves and unusual curving petioles, is *Excoecaria dallachyana* (Scrub Poison Tree). Back at Andrew Doig Park, we again followed the edge of the forest.

Still in flower in May were *Solanum stelligerum* (Devil's Needles) – note the black spines at the leaf midrib, below – and *Rorripa eustylis* (Dwarf Bitter Cress) in the Brassica family.

A pencil orchid we observed flowering has been identified by Joan Heavey as *Dockrillia bowmanii* (Straggly Pencil Orchid), described in David Jones' Complete Guide to Orchids of Australia as flowering February – June and having a labellum with crinkled margins and three parallel ridges. Of the two pencil orchids on the Murray Grey Drive Plant Species List, neither *Dockrillia schoenina* (previously *Dendrobium beckeri*) nor *Dockrillia teretifolia* (was *Dendrobium teretifolium*) fits this description or flowering time, so *D. bowmanii* can be added to the species list, along with *Geodorum densiflorum* (Shepherd's Crook Orchid) and *R. eustylis*.

Thanks must go to Pam Watson, Eric Anderson and Diana O'Connor for organising such a botanically interesting excursion.







## Flowers from other very different parts of Australia

Some flowers seen in June where the Simpson, Sturt Stony and Tirari deserts meet.





Some Flowers seen in June on the eastern edge of the Tanami Desert

