

# Banksia Bytes

## Native Plants Sunshine Coast



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

Native Plants Queensland

## Newsletter

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*Boronia glabra*

From the editor

*Hello all native plant enthusiasts of the Native Plants Sunshine Coast Branch. It is a long time since we met but plans are underway to remedy this. **We still need a secretary.** However, we have a new excursions officer, Julie Nimmo, who is keen to get us out and about again while Joan, our treasurer, is temporarily managing the member database and coordinating the mailouts. Spring is a time of renewal for every living thing.*

And spring has definitely arrived. At our place, there are red leaves on the cedars, the silky oaks have dropped almost all their leaves and are replacing them with bright green foliage, the rasp ferns have their lovely rusty-red new fronds, and the perfume of the



macadamia flowers greets us in the mornings and evenings. I hope you have been out and enjoyed some of the wildflowers in the Sunshine Coast parks. We have once again taken delight in the flowers in Mooloolah NP, where the fires last year didn't reach, and Joan D has been visiting Gardens for Wildlife gardens in the hinterland. We ventured out to Gurulmundi to enjoy the wildflowers there, and I have included a few photos. In 2008, David and Olive Hockings led a regional SGAP excursion



to Gurulmundi (which some of you may have been part of), and it has inspired us to visit there in spring a few times since.

Other life forms know spring is here and Maria has been out with her camera. Laura has put her time to good use, researching the grevilleas that call the Sunshine Coast home, and Marie meanwhile is working with the seaside elements of wind and salt to get a balcony garden established.

Enjoy the warmer weather in the garden.

Wendy

## **We need a secretary.**

The duties are not onerous – mostly updating the database with new members, passing on information (such as other Branch newsletters or Region information) to the members, posting a call for articles for our newsletter (only 3 or 4 times a year) and then distributing the newsletter. Please give the position due consideration and put your hand up for the job.



## Sunshine Coast Grevilleas

by Laura Adler

A friend recently commented that there were no local native grevilleas on the Sunshine Coast. I immediately claimed they were wrong and that I saw many of them on the side of the Bruce Highway, for example, and that they were *Grevillea banksii*. Friend then stated that all the 'wild' grevilleas that I thought I was seeing were actually garden hybrid escapees. This sounded a bit sad to a native plant lover, so, I decided to prove them wrong.

Of course, they had to relent when I said, "what about *Grevillea robusta*?" Just about the most important and spectacular grevillea around! Silky Oak is a bit out of fashion these days but was once a valuable timber in SE Queensland. A long time ago, some clever person planted an avenue of Silky Oak and Jacaranda on the north side of Woombye along the road towards Nambour, and they never fail to perform spectacularly in the spring. Although I love this colour combination of glorious gold and purple, I do wish people would stop planting the Jacaranda, as it has now become an invasive weed in our vulnerable remnant bushland. As to whether this grevillea species is a local native, or, from somewhere else, my search was inconclusive. According to our own Spencer Shaw's article on the Sunshine Coast Council webpages, *Grevillia robusta* was from out west, so perhaps it was introduced to the coastal region by the timber getters.



***Grevillea robusta***

Photo: John Carter

*Figure 1: Photo from the ANPSA webpage for G. robusta*

I looked up *Grevillea banksii* in the Atlas of Living Australia and according to this data base, the species is endemic to Queensland with a distribution along the east coast from Ipswich to Yeppoon. There are either creamy white or various shades of bright red flowers and it grows as a bushy, or spindly, shrub to small tree, from two to ten metres. It was first described (by Western taxonomy) in 1810 by botanist Robert Brown and named, of course, to honour Joseph Banks. It is a widely cultivated species and is a parent to many of our most favourite hybrids including 'Robyn Gordon', 'Misty Pink', 'Ned Kelly', 'Pink Surprise' and 'Superb'. It is therefore easy to imagine that it could naturally hybridise and appear along our roadsides

displaying a variety of colours. The range for wild forms of *G. banksii* given by the ANPSA website does not show the distribution as far south as the Sunshine Coast. I am wondering about the beautifully flowering specimens I have seen along the south bound M1 just past the Caloundra exit. I have always assumed these were our local form of *G. banksii*.

Interestingly, *G. banksii* was introduced to Hawaii where it is now a weed and is known as kähili flower (Atlas of Living Australia, 2022).



Figure 2: Photos from the ANPSA webpage for *G. banksii*

The large, shrubby grevilleas are spectacular bird attractors when in bloom and are an obvious favourite with many gardeners. While wild forms may bloom in late winter through spring, many of the cultivars will bloom year-round. One drawback is that flowers and seed pods contain toxic hydrogen cyanide and *G. banksii* and 'Robyn Gordon' contain alkylresorcinols shown to cause contact dermatitis (Atlas of Living Australia, 2022). Long sleeves and gloves are a 'must' for pruning! And most of the larger grevilleas do need a good hard annual prune to promote stronger new growth and perhaps a more formal shape if desired. If you are lucky enough to have room for *G. robusta* in your garden, you need only look out for, and prune off, any possible second trunk, as these tall trees will perform best with a single straight trunk. They are perfectly placed down slope of your veranda for the best views of blooms, birds and other wildlife.

Other grevilleas to look out for in the heath and open forests of the Sunshine Coast are *Grevillea leiophylla*, *Grevillea reptans* (from Cooloola North) and *Grevillea humilis* subsp. *lucens* (from Caloundra south) (Shaw, 2022). The Coochin Hills Grevillea (*Grevillea hodgei*) is a rare plant that has been mostly recorded in the Glass House Mountains area, but also has a sighting recorded on the NSW coast between Newcastle and Sydney (Atlas of Living Australia 3, 2022). These lesser-known grevilleas are not easy to find for our home gardens and if this is an area of interest for you, there is an ANPSA Grevillea Study Group that is open for

members. This group includes the authors of The Grevillea Books, Peter Olde and Neil Marriott, and these three volumes provide a wealth of information on this genus (ANPSA, 2022).



Figure 3: *G. leiophylla*. Image rights holder is Widebrownland. Image supplied to Atlas of Living Australia via iNaturalist Australia 21/02/2021 (Atlas of Living Australia 2, 2022).

My friend is now assured that we do host local native, in fact, endemic, grevilleas in our hinterland neighbourhood, but, they have not yet joined me in smacking the nectar from one of the numerous blooms loaded with sweetness into the palm of the hand for a lick of delight. This was apparently a common bush lolly for Aboriginal people, who would also use grevillea nectar much like we use cordial today, to make a sweet drink. Enjoy these local and hybridised beauties as much as your wildlife friends do, but, remember: do not eat the blooms!

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[Accessed 17 September 2022].

## Fuschia by Nature

Do you love to see gorgeous macro-photography images of our wonderful Wallum wildflowers? I am a huge fan and my own photos often disappoint. I have only made time for a few wildflower jaunts this season and I have really appreciated the excellent photography presented in the Facebook page, “Fuschia by Nature”. It is inspiring to see these images shared and loved by others in the community and good to know that we still have examples of some of the most beautiful flowers blooming in our Wallum reserves around the coast. Even if you do not have a Facebook account, you can scroll through Fuschia’s posts from any web browser. Just search for “Fuschia by Nature.” (Images contributed with permission from Fuschia).



Figure 1: *Pimelia linifolia* pink form image courtesy of Fuschia by Nature.

## Attention: Re-wilding urban areas now trending around the world!

Are you interested in donating your garden space to the local wildlife often displaced by our industrial and housing estates? Or, have you already created a wildlife-friendly garden and would like to share your knowledge and experience with others? If you would like to participate in the growing trend to re-wild urban areas and would like to know more about how to support your local wildlife (without inviting them into your home), please contact Laura at [suburbs4wildlife@gmail.com](mailto:suburbs4wildlife@gmail.com).

## Wildflowers of Mooloolah NP

By Wendy Johnston

Late last year, a wildfire burnt through large areas of Mooloolah NP. A week or so ago we approached the park from the end of Claymore Rd where the area was unburnt and found plenty of flowers. There were few flowers in the burnt areas.

*Boronia falcifolia*



*Goodenia stelligera*



*Burchardia umbellata*



*Pultenaea myrtoides*



*Mirbelia rubiifolia*



*Patersonia fragilis*



*Sowerbaea juncea*



*Conospermum taxifolium*



## Gardens for Wildlife

By Joan Dillon

Barung Landcare recently organised a weekend of excursions to several GfW gardens in the Maleny area. Barung members started in our garden, easily the most established, and moved on to newer gardens where their owners were facing many challenges. These ranged from steep slopes, heavy privet infestation, flood damage earlier in the year, and an experiment in replacing exotic grasses with native species. Watch this space for the latter.



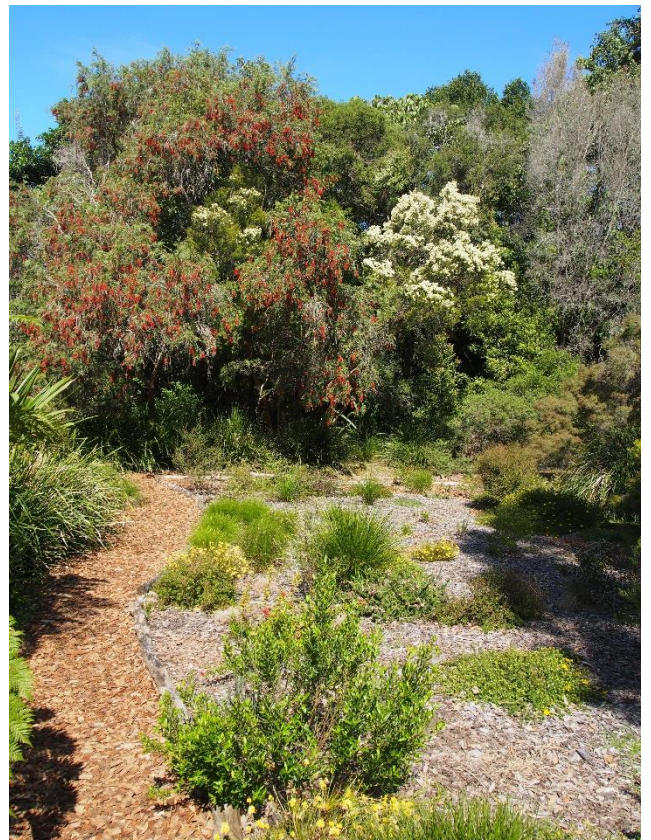
Owners of the newer gardens were trialling local native species such as *Pollia* in a damp shaded area at the bottom of a significant slope, *Pultanea villosa* in the sun and the issue of what will grow in the shade - always tricky.

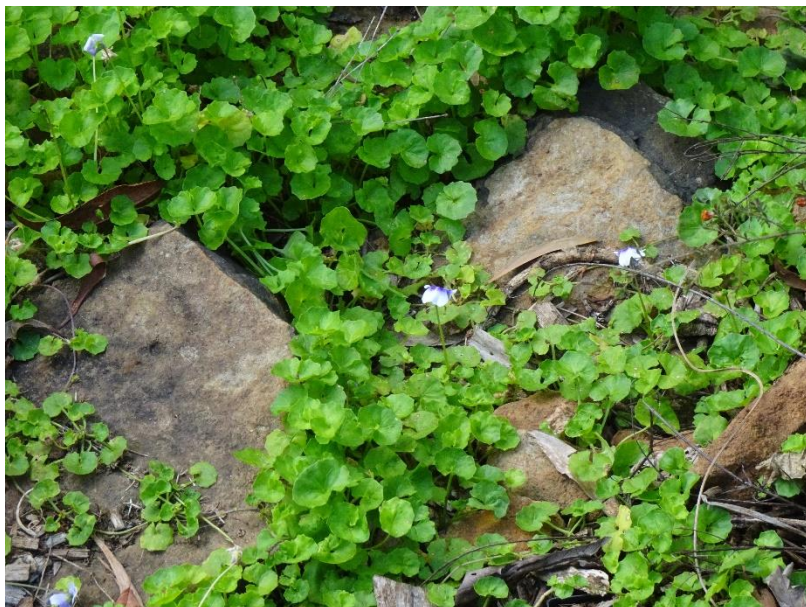
Barung's own GfW garden on the Maleny Precinct is developing quite well featuring a range of paper daisies, low shrubs, kangaroo grass and creative use of a large tree trunk plus boulders.

Our own garden is of course always changing as groundcovers like *Scaevola* are shaded out by shrub growth and some larger shrubs are dying of old age and will need replacing. Any garden is an ongoing joy and challenge.



Visiting other people's gardens is an excellent way to see what can be grown in our varied soil types, to exchange information on methods of solving weed problems, resolving drainage issues, and 'what can you grow under a grove of established native palms??'.





The accompanying photos are of our garden, now quite colourful, and the Barung garden, with one other where native violets have filled the spaces between steppingstones on a casual path.

Footnote: *Hibbertia vestita*, *Hibbertia aspera* and *Conostylis* (WA) are a mass of bright yellow this spring contrasting with deep blue *Dampiera diversifolia* and *D. stricta* 'Glasshouse Glory'.

## What will survive on the sea front?

By Marie Livingstone

This was the dilemma as we left 20 acres in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland for unit living at Moreton Bay.

Rather than waste money experimenting, I dug up some seedlings and plants from Peachester that I thought might be tough and struck two cuttings from a couple of creepers.

10 months on and they are all surviving. The plants do better in the winter when they can sit behind the closed glass and bask in the morning sun but do look a bit "long suffering" when the salt-laden sea breeze hits them in the warmer months. Another summer might show which ones "have what it takes".

The *Hoya australis* is thriving but will it flower? The *Pandorea jasminoides* 'Lady Di' is sure it can grow through the ceiling and has been trimmed many times. It has had a couple of flowers.

The ferns seem happy enough and I have yet to experiment with other varieties that Wendy Johnston suggested.

The real surprise is the *Lepiderema pulchella* which was unceremoniously dug up and dumped into a pot just before we moved. How long will it last? The Ginger seed must have been in the soil as well and it is trying to grow – good luck.



I knew *Athertonia diversifolia* was tough but it has also proved surprisingly adaptable. Again, time will tell how long it is prepared to put up with conditions by the sea.

The prize goes to *Proiphys cunninghamii* – I never expected it to flower.

What care do I give them?

Basically none - some misting in summer to help with the salt spray and water as needed. They will have to be re-potted before too long – that could cause a bit of a mess and no potting bench to work on!

So - to all those native plant gardeners living on the sea front – what suggestions can you make for seaside balconies?



## Gurulmundi

by Wendy Johnston

When you live under the canopy of the trees as we do and occasionally dream of a pretty cottage garden, an excursion to Gurulmundi in spring is a great idea. The Great Dividing Range at that point is barely recognisable and the soil is very degraded – typical wildflower country. Our trip was well rewarded. The wattles growing along the highway were in full bloom and around the Chinchilla area they formed avenues of gold. The untimely wet weather nearly defeated us but the gravel roads held up with only a few interesting creek crossings. It is impressive to see the wildflowers growing in what appears to be a most inhospitable area. There are signs to the wildflowers from Miles. We enjoyed our stay at Possum Park, an area used to store ammunition in underground bunkers in WW2.



*Calytrix gurulmundi*



*Westringia cheelii*



*Boronia glabra*



*Harmogia densifolia*



*Homalocalyx polyandrus*



*Acacia triptera*



*Kunzea opposita*



*Dampiera adpressa*



*Grevillia longifolia*



*Calytrix tetragona*

Maria has sent in some observations and a fungi question.



Here is a gorgeous flower which several visitors to my place have dubbed “The Coronavirus Flower”.

And the fungus picture comes with a question – does anyone know what sort it is? It was growing on a slab of rotting wood.



These are caterpillars of the *Mynes geoffroyi* (White or Jezabel Nymph) butterfly, assembled on the underside of a native mulberry leaf. And yes, the poor native mulberry trees really cop it. Sometimes they almost die from having their leaves stripped.

Here is the pupa looking pretty ugly - but check out the pretty butterfly that comes out of it!





## Petrie Creek Catchment Care Group Inc.

@PetrieCreekCatchmentCareGroupInc · Community organisation

Getting involved: most Saturdays sees a keen group of volunteers gathering at one of three regenerating sites on Petrie Creek in Nambour. Their work over many years has seen a huge difference made to the often very steep banks of this important creek and to the wildlife that still call it home, even in the centre of town. Have you seen the platypus? You can visit their Facebook page for more information and even if you do not have an account yourself, you can watch the video of the platypus as well as view other wonderful wildlife pictures.

### Three colour forms of the rice flower at Gurulmundi



## Fern Fever

by Wendy Johnston

From “That Time When Victorians Contracted Fern Fever” by Erin Blakemore 2015

Pteridomania was a fearsome ailment. Symptoms caused women to swoon and fall off of cliffs—and entire species to fall into endangered status. But the contagious disease wasn’t one of the body: “Fern fever” was a fad that swept through England during the 19th century.

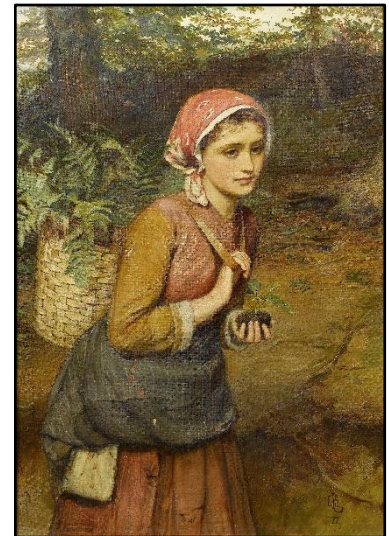
Not so surprisingly, a botanist was to blame for the craze. In 1829, Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward had given up trying to grow ferns in the polluted London air and had moved on to studying moths. But when studying a chrysalis that he kept in a covered glass bottle, he noticed that ferns began to grow in the soil at the bottom of the jar. Ignoring the moth, he began to experiment with tightly-sealed glass cases.

To modern-day readers, there’s nothing unusual about a terrarium, but “Wardian cases”, as they became known, were big news for Victorians. Suddenly, it was possible to grow and study plants indoors—a feat helped along by quick industrialization, which made such devices accessible to ordinary people. People started to mail-order exotic ferns to grow at home and set out in search of the perfect specimen.



Wardian Case

It turns out that ferns’ sex lives are just as bizarre as the idea of fern fever sweeping an entire nation. As NPR’s Geoff Brumfiel recently reported, at least one species of fern emerged from the unexpected mating between two different fern species that lived and flourished in completely different places and were “separated by nearly 60 million years of evolution.” Fern-o-mania’s biggest proponents were young women, who took to fern hunting, preservation, and growth in large numbers. Charles Kingsley dubbed the phenomenon Pteridomania, complaining that “Your daughters, perhaps ... [are] wrangling over unpronounceable names of species, (which seem to be different with every new fern that they buy), till the Pteridomania seems to you something of a bore.”



Charles Sillem Lidderdale – “The fern Gatherer” 1877

In the socially acceptable pursuit of ferns, young women could get outdoors, often without the strict chaperonage of indoor activities. They could have adventures and compete with one another. They also could run into trouble: In her book *The Bronte Cabinet: Three Lives in Nine Objects*, Deborah Lutz writes about a fern-seeker named Miss Jane Myers who plummeted 170 feet to her death while gathering ferns.

But the relentless pursuit of all things fern had a downside: It led to dramatic depopulation of native fern species in the UK. Species like the Killarney fern still suffer from the effects of the craze today—an unexpected dark side to what seems like a harmless obsession.

**Thanks to Maria Rosenfelder, Joan Dillon, Laura Adler and Marie Livingstone for their contributions to this newsletter.**

**End of Banksia Bytes 29**