

Banksia Bytes

Native Plants Sunshine Coast



www.npqsuncoast.org

Native Plants Queensland

Newsletter

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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.

From the Editor

There is not much flowering here at present but the Wheel of Fire is a bright spot in the garden. Aren't we lucky to live in an area that gets plenty of rain, making the gardens and forests look fresh and green. In the low-rainfall area of Myall Park Botanic Garden in the western downs there has been some rain and Robert describes his visit there. Spencer shows us some native Hibiscus you might like to grow, and Joan shows us some great fillers for your small garden. Lester asks about pruning banksias to get more blooms for the birds. Please let us know your experience with this.

Enjoy the winter gardening

Wendy



Sunshine Coast Native Hibiscus

by Spencer Shaw

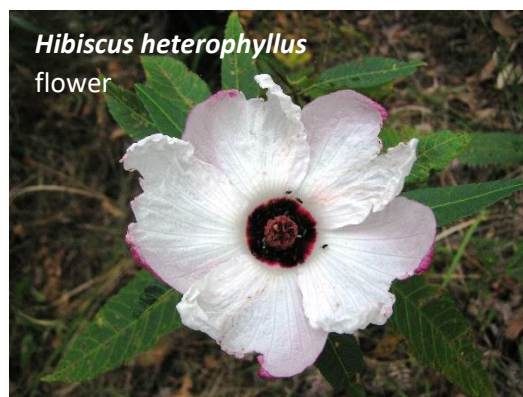
When we think of Hibiscus, we think of the classic exotic Queensland tropical garden flower, with a huge range of cultivars and spectacular colours. However, along with these showy varieties, we have five Hibiscuses that are native to the Sunshine Coast.

First up is the Cotton Tree - *Hibiscus tiliaceus*. This is a beautiful hardy coastal tree that some people love and unfortunately some people love to hate. They are robust and can produce prolific suckering and dense thickets that are great for stabilising estuarine riverbanks or coastal foreshores. Mature trees produce thick horizontal branches that are great to run around in and if your kids haven't had the opportunity to climb in a Cotton Tree they are missing out!

Next up is the Swamp Hibiscus - *Hibiscus diversifolius*. Despite its name these are a great, colourful fast growing plant for the garden. Relatively short lived at only a year or two, they grow quickly to between 1-2 metres in coastal wetlands that are subject to disturbance. They produce masses of yellow flowers nearly 10cm across.

For speed of growth and colour you can't go past the Native Rosella - *Hibiscus heterophyllus*, the Pink Hibiscus - *Hibiscus splendens* and *Hibiscus divaricatus*. All three of these shrubs of the open woodlands grow to between 2-6 metres depending on conditions. The most widespread throughout the Sunshine Coast is the Native Rosella *Hibiscus heterophyllus* which has white to pink 8cm flowers. The Pink Hibiscus, *Hibiscus splendens* is less common in our area and it has a tendency to develop a rather bushy habit with huge 15cm pale pink flowers. The *Hibiscus divaricatus* is the least common throughout the region but is found in a few patches of open woodland and has yellow 12cm flowers.

Honeyeaters take advantage of the large nectar-rich flowers of species such as *Hibiscus diversifolius*, *Hibiscus heterophyllus* and *Hibiscus splendens*, while seed eaters like the lorikeet feast upon the seed capsules of *Hibiscus heterophyllus*. Insects such as The Harlequin Bug *Didymus versicolor* seek out all five of the native hibiscuses, but let us appreciate their added colour rather than seeing them as a pest.



Small Gardens

By Joan Dillon

I recently received two editions of *Australian Plants*, one titled *Small Australian Native Gardens*. Lawrie Smith (Garden Design Study Group) contributed a general article on design principles plus a description of an experimental courtyard section of his own garden, 'downsized' from 5 acres to 800 sqm. Downsizing can face many of us and for others, house blocks are increasingly small. Balcony gardens were not featured but creativity knows no bounds. Two other Brisbane gardens are included plus, of course, small gardens in other states. The gardeners name the plants featured in their photographs, very useful for those looking for ideas.

My own 'wallum style' small garden within the larger garden is coming along and after about 3 years is filling in. I avoided over-planting so it has looked a bit sparse, apart from losing a few species which did not tolerate either my heavy soil or seasonal variability of heat, cold, rain, no rain etc.



The photograph shows grass trees, lomandras, *Hibbertia aspera* in the foreground.

The three *Xanthorrhoea latifolia* have grown remarkably well. Being grown from seed there was natural variation with, fortunately, the two at the rear of the triangle being taller than the one in front. *Hibbertia aspera* subsp. *aspera* has proved to be very successful so seedlings have been encouraged or potted up to fill spaces. It flowered all spring and summer and has only recently stopped. *Hibbertia vestita* also had a long flowering season and is spreading. *Patersonia sericea* took a while to establish but is now thriving and I hope will flower in spring.

Several small grevilleas have adapted to the conditions with Grevillea 'Pink Midget' (*Grevillea humilis* with a marketing name?) flowering consistently and Grevillea 'Mt Tamboritha' looking very healthy. Others are not local but at least they are Australian natives. Fine leaved lomandras such as *L.confertifolia* subsp. *confertifolia* are invaluable

fillers in a small garden.

Some late autumn/winter colour would be appreciated but I have yet to locate a plant of a suitable size and degree of hardiness. I shall keep looking.

Myall Park Botanic Garden

By Robert M. Price

November might not seem the best choice of month to visit Myall Park, situated as it is near to Glenmorgan, about 200 km west of Dalby and just south of the Dogwood confluence. This is the point at which the Condamine becomes the Balonne River. However, we had experienced a mild, wet spring in 2022 and Linda and I were hopeful that at least some of Dave Gordon's famous collection of native plants would be flowering. Once on the property and before climbing the gentle rise to the gardens, there is a causeway to cross. On our arrival, water was stretching off on either side. The lagoon was full.



It filled for the first time in 1953, the year after it had been made by none other than Joh Bjelke-Petersen who had come to the district post World War 2 as a contract brigalow clearer. Clearing the dense brigalow (*Acacia harpophylla*) forest was a sad necessity if intending to run sheep on this country. In 1910, when James Gordon acquired land on the Balonne with this intention, he was careful to retain many significant, useful or just unusual trees, such as Boonarees (*Alectryon oleifolius*), Bauhinias (*Lysiphyllum carronii*) and the magnificent gums. He was a well-read man whose collection of western literature classics – Shakespeare, Goethe, the Greek philosophers etc. – are in the Myall Park library. His son, David Gordon, having purchased nearby Myall Park in 1926, followed in the footsteps of his father James by also clearing only as he thought necessary. Since 1843, much of the Maranoa and the Western Downs had become infested with Prickly Pear (*Opuntia sp.*), the plant having arrived at Port Jackson with the first fleet in 1778 to establish a cochineal industry for red dye. Preventing its further spread on Myall Park was vital as sheep would eat pear, but it eventually killed them. Eradication was back-breaking work. While young plants could be sprayed with the herbicide arsenic pentoxide, established pear had to be felled, stacked, dried and burnt. However, in 1933, *Cactoblastis cactorum*, a moth from Argentina, was introduced to the country and its larvae successfully ate the pest to keep it under control.

The road and stock route west from Glenmorgan to Surat was once thickly lined with the weed, in marked contrast to today with brigalow regrowth (and only the occasional Prickly Pear) providing a pleasing avenue for the traveller to enjoy.



Studying at night, Dave Gordon built up considerable knowledge of Australian plants, particularly those of the arid interior. He collected seed and experimented, cultivating plants on the rich soil of the flood plain, but the lone survivor was Wonga Wonga Vine (***Pandorea pandorana***). No doubt, this prompted the realisation that he might have more success growing the plants he desired on a nearby hill on the property. It was 27 m above the surrounding plains, 275 m above sea level, frost free and composed of a light, loamy soil mixed with sand and ironstone gravel. Indigenous plants such as Budda (***Eremophila mitchellii***) and Northern Sandalwood (***Santalum lanceolatum***) grew there but, sadly, the previous owner had ringbarked many Smooth-barked Apples (***Angophora leiocarpa***), causing considerable erosion.



*Calyxes retained after flowering, ***Eremophila mitchellii****



Santalum lanceolatum (Northern Sandalwood)

Now, I'm pleased to say, there are a good number of these trees in the gardens, their trunks with peeling bark standing out against surrounding foliage.

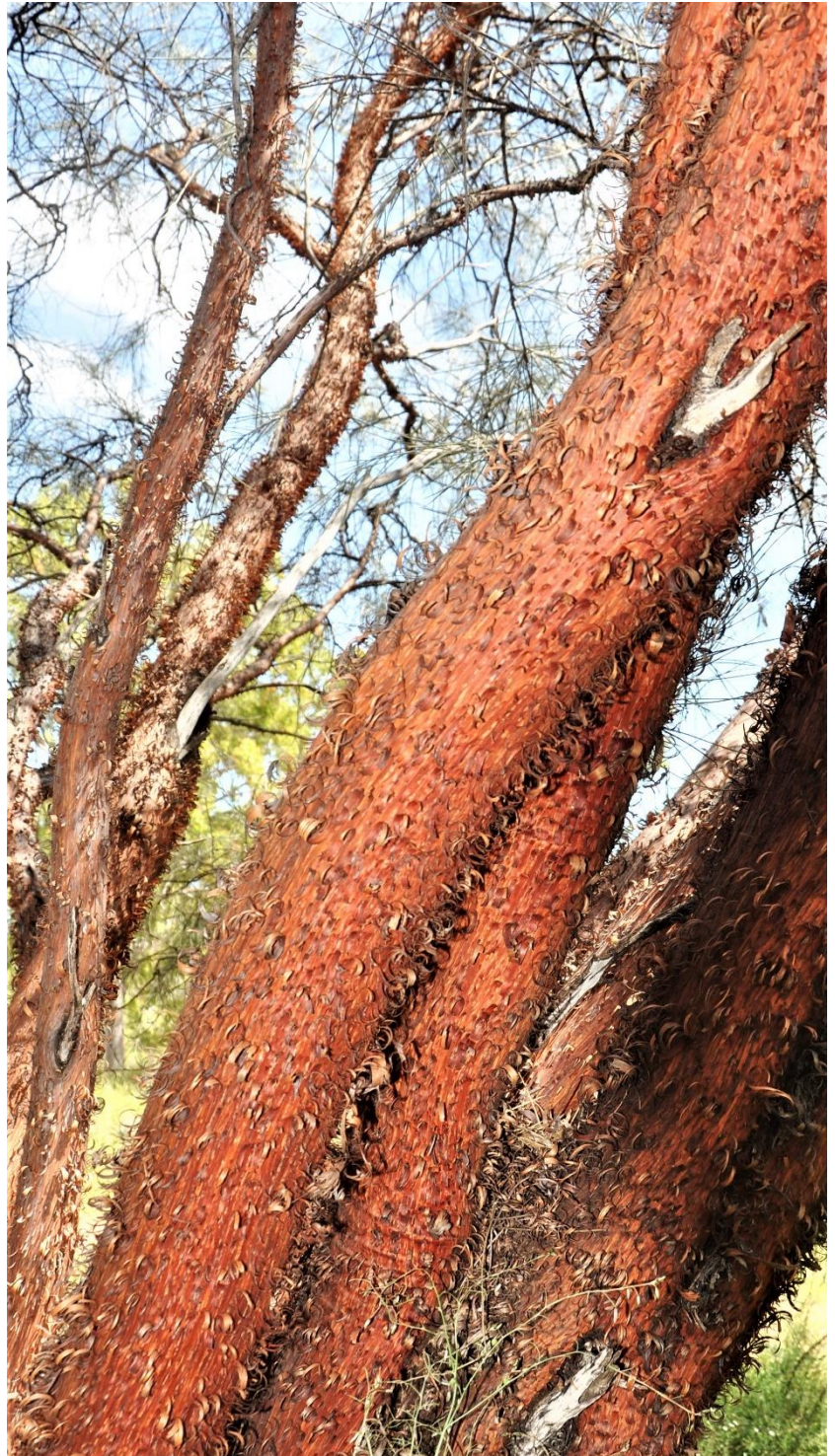


In 1940, the decision was made to move the old house from its position on Myall Creek, where it was flood prone, to a site on the hill overlooking the creek. Here, the first plantings were made by Dave: a *Callistemon sp.* (possibly *C. phoeniceus*), *Senna artemesioides* and *Hakea leucoptera*. The Callistemon is from Western Australia, the Cassia is widespread and the Hakea could well be native to the area. It has now naturalised at Myall Park and there were many of them flowering in a small grove.



Other early plantings were made of various Eucalypts such as the Western Australian red-budded mallee (*Eucalyptus pachyphylla*), Broombush (*Melaleuca uncinata*), and one of the miniritchies, *Acacia cyperophylla*, (pictured, right) with its bark shedding in curly strips to reveal a striking orange trunk. The seed of this species was collected at Cooper Ck.

Dave Gordon was now travelling widely on plant and seed collecting trips. The post-war wool boom had brought prosperity to sheep graziers, which allowed more time for these sorts of activities. He married Dorothy Gemmell in 1952 and she came to live at Myall Park at a time when the property was becoming a small village: apart from the main house, there were five cottages, a garage, a saw-mill and a nursery. Twenty-six thousand sheep were sheared annually and many people were employed; these were the years of planting and experimenting with varying techniques of cultivation. Rotary-hoeing to control weed growth was abandoned on the advice of David Hockings who considered that the practice caused too much disturbance of the soil structure. Mulching helped with weed prevention, but, with annual rainfall averaging 575 mm and as high as 1016 mm in the summer of 1962, a thick layer of organic material held too much water and plants of the arid interior succumbed to rot. On a smaller scale, I have found mulching dry-land plants with gravel useful, but with acres of “gardens” to maintain, the only answer seems to be hand-weeding.



The results of so many years of hard work, by the Gordon family and their employees, the non-profit company Myall Park Botanic Garden Ltd., Friends of Myall Park Botanic Garden and numerous volunteers, were all around us as we drove and walked the road and tracks of the gardens. The following photos are just a small selection of the delights to be discovered by visiting this wonderful property.



Eucalyptus kruseana (Book-leaf Mallee)



Eucalyptus kingsmillii (Kingsmill's Mallee)



Acacia glaucoptera (Flat Wattle)



Acacia craspedocarpa (Hop Mulga)



Eremophila mackinlayi (Desert Pride)



Kardomia jucunda



Melaleuca cardiophylla (Umbrella Bush)



Psyrax oleifolius (Myrtle Bush)

Most people are familiar with the Grevillea hybrids bearing the names of Gordon family members: Dorothy, and her and Dave's children, Robyn, Sandra, Merinda and Peter. Some may be unaware of ***Grevillea gordoniana***, a Western Australian species found north of Geraldton in 1956 by Alf Gray, who worked at Myall Park and was sent to W.A. by Dave to collect seed. That state's government botanist, C. A. Gardener, named it in recognition of the invaluable work done by David and Dorothy. Myall Park was listed on the Register of the National Estate in 1989 and in 1995, the Myall Park Gallery, dedicated to Dorothy Gordon, was opened.



Pictured (left) is a covered eating area on the site of the old saw-mill. Behind that is a small gift and book shop and the fireproof art gallery built to display Dorothy Gordon's paintings of Myall Park plantings. Fifty of these water-colours were published with an Australian

Bicentenary grant in 1988. The book was reprinted last year and is once more available at the Gallery shop.

David Morrice Gordon died aged 102 in 2001. It is inevitable that someone who lived that long would have personal losses in their lifetime but Dave had more than his fair share. Yet his life's work continued and his legacy lives on at Myall Park Botanic Garden.

Ref: One Man's Dream by Betty McKenzie.

There has been a Banksia question

I wonder if cutting off spent candlesticks will promote more as the rainbow lorikeets and wattle birds adore them. Regards Lester Scott



ED:

If anyone can give advice on the pruning of banksias please let me know.

[As I recall, Marie left the pruning to the yellow-tailed black cockatoos but whether that promoted more flowers I don't know – perhaps she will tell us.]

March excursion

This excursion to the Buderim Forest Nature Refuge went ahead on a fine day, following a few days of rain.





A few leeches joined our group!!

Did you know that there is a commercial leech farm at Echuca that farms leeches for medicinal use in hospitals?

Maybe we should shriek with admiration rather than horror when a leech attaches to us?

May excursion

Our Mothers Day excursion to visit Maria's garden was cancelled due to rain.



Why not go wild... & come wildflowering!

New for 2023!

QUEENSLAND COASTAL WILDFLOWERING RETREATS

COOLOOLA	6-9 Aug
SUNSHINE COAST 1	13-16 Aug
SUNSHINE COAST 2	4-7 Sept
SUNSHINE COAST 3	18-21 Sept

Discover the magic of our coastal heathlands and wildflowers

Noosa, Peregian, Coolool, Coolool, Currimundi & more.



Wildflower Women projects
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**See Wild/flower Women Projects
 on Eventbrite or contact us to
 secure your spot!**

Wildflowering Retreats in August and September

Under the banner of 'Wild/flower Women' Dr Sue Davis is organising a range of guided wildflower walks, workshops, retreats and nature/art experiences across the Sunshine Coast and Noosa regions. Occasional walks/retreats are also organised for the Coolool region. These experiences are generally in coastal 'heathland' areas where a surprising range of wildflowers and native plants can be found especially from July-September. For this year Sue is offering some new 3.5 day Wildflowering Retreats for Coolool and the Sunshine Coast. For each retreat a guest artist will also be joining.

Each tour includes...

- At least five guided wildflower walks across different reserves and National Parks in the Coolool OR Noosa and Sunshine Coast regions
- Talks and workshops with Traditional Custodians and artists
- Three nights twin-share accommodation at the Rainbow Ocean Palms Resort (for the Coolool Retreat) OR the The Retreat Resort, Peregian (for Sunshine Coast retreats)
- Most meals
- Coffee, tea, water and snacks throughout
- Transfers to walks

The retreats will be lead by Wild/flower Woman Dr Sue Davis with guest artists including Joolie Gibbs, Edith Rewa, Lyndon Davis, Anne Harris, Libby Derham and Chony Bowden joining us for different retreats.

Wild/flower Women has a QPWS commercial permit and Noosa Council permit. Founder Dr Sue Davis has decades of experience as an educator, facilitator, guide and creative practitioner. Over the past 7 years she has developed extensive knowledge of wallum wildflowers and walk locations across selected South East Queensland sites. She is a fully qualified teacher with QCT registration, current First Aid certificate and a yellow card for working with children.

For more info on the retreats (with Early Bird rates available until mid June) see <https://www.wildflowerwomen.com.au/wildflowering-retreats>

Native Plants Regional Council Meeting at Pine Rivers



Thanks to Spencer Shaw, Robert Price, Julie Nimmo, Joan Dillon, Lester Scott and Sue Davis for their contributions to this newsletter.



End of Banksia Bytes 31