

# Banksia Bytes

## Native Plants Sunshine Coast

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



Native Plants Queensland



## Newsletter

January 2024 Number 33

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### From the editor

With an unexpected wet start to the year, I hope your garden is looking as healthy as ours. Our ferns are loving it and showing what a great groundcover ferns can make under shrubs and trees. The wildlife around here seems very happy too. We particularly enjoyed the variety of birds feeding on the fruit of *Dysoxylum mollissimum* subsp. *molle*.

Fortunately, we have sustained no damage from the storms. Anne at Kumbia was not so lucky and has sent us her story. Also in this newsletter Spencer describes *Commersonia bartramia*, which I used to see flowering profusely along the Bruce Hwy just south of here at this time of year; Maria has shared some photos of interesting plants in her garden; Robert gives advice on what to plant under eucalypts; Julie is busy cooking up some fig paste for a feast and Spencer talks about seed dispersal and its implications for revegetation projects.

Keep cool and enjoy the read,

Wendy



## Presidents Report Native Plants Sunshine Coast 2024

Well after 5 years as President of Native Plants Sunshine Coast, I've decided its time for me to stop hogging the position and give someone else a go! Together we've made it through the difficulties of Covid and it's time for a fresh face to take on the role and steer the group into the future. Maria Rosenfelder has been approached to take on the role and has graciously accepted to do so, but if anyone else wishes to put themselves forward please do so. I don't plan on going too far. Karen and I are still keen to help out with leading excursions and talking at events and providing educational material as required. We're busier than ever with Brush Turkey Enterprises and Forest Heart ecoNursery and have an exciting program of events coming up in February and March, celebrating Bunya / Bonyi - *Araucaria bidwillii* and more soberly addressing Bunya Dieback in our region.

Thank you to the team for 2023. Julie Nimmo took on the role of Excursion Co-ordinator, we had a great range of events in 2023 and many more to come in 2024. Special thanks to our Treasurer Joan Abercrombie for taking on the role of TEMPORARY Secretary. If someone else can chat with Joan about freeing her up from this role asap, it would be much appreciated. Thank you to Wendy Johnston for producing our Banksia Bytes Newsletter and Rob Price and Joan Dillon (amongst many others) for contributing such great articles. Maria Rosenfelder has taken on the role of Webmaster, and keeps up to date with our calendar and so much more.

Activities planned by NPSC for 2024 are monthly gatherings and walks and the Banksia Bytes newsletter, but also keep in mind that you can also join in the activities of the NPQ Study groups such as Wallum and Coastal Heathland. There's a whole host of study groups - just visit the NPQ website for more info. Also, the ANPSA Fern Study Group is another great group to participate in, in SE QLD.

Key to 2024 is participation - be active in keeping NPSC, your local native plant group, going and growing. With an estimated 2600 species of native plants (Sunshine Coast Council Biodiversity Report 2020) there's plenty of plants for us to learn more about and help contribute to the preservation of them and the biodiversity that they represent. As always, enjoy growing, looking at, and appreciating our fantastic flora.

Cheers Spencer Shaw

19/01/2024

### Bog pots by Wendy Johnston

Have you experimented with a bog garden in a pot? Mine are doing well, particularly in this weather where one has become more like a water garden in the last few weeks. I'm growing swamp ferns in the lower pot and they have produced spore which I am hoping is a sign they are thriving.



Our first meeting of the year will be held at the

**Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve**

**Sunday 11 February at 9.45 for 10.00am**

**Address: 148 Mountain View Rd, Maleny QLD 4552**

**Roles available** - we are still looking for a Secretary. This would be someone who forwards on emails to branch members (a group list is set up). It involves checking the branch emails, forwarding on Banksia Bytes (Newsletter) and forwarding on invitations to our meetings. You will need a computer and about an hour a week.

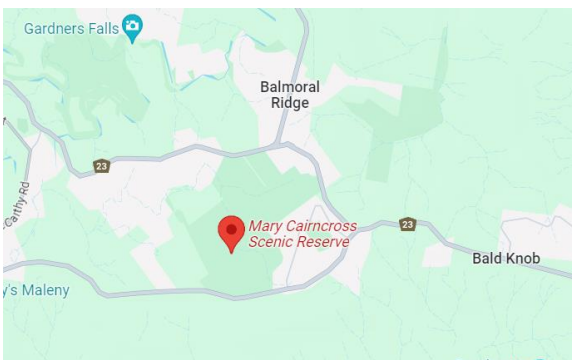
The AGM will be followed by a talk by Mark Amos (manager of Lake Baroon Catchment) on the Role of native plants in the work of the Lake Baroon Catchment. Mark has over 25 years' experience in the environmental and agriculture industries, working with various government, semi-government, and community groups. Growing up in rural Victoria with a close association with the bush from a young age, Mark was destined to work in the environmental industry, initially as Summer Fire Crew with the Department of Conservation. Mark has since worked for the North Central Catchment Management Authority in river management, Mallee CMA as a Landcare Facilitator, several Landcare groups, Greening Australia as a rural fencer and seed collector, and a Sunshine Coast commercial Bush Regenerator and Landscaper. Perhaps most importantly Mark worked on the family 6,000 acre wheat and sheep farm, acquiring all round skills and ensuring a good understanding and empathy for our often embattled farmers. This is an ideal talk for those with a larger property or if you have previously wondered what a catchment care group does.

**The meeting will be followed by lunch for those interested at the Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve cafe**

**Please RSVP for the AGM only or AGM and lunch by Wednesday February 7th with your name and phone number**

**(in case we have to call).**

So catch up with friends, meet some new people and enjoy a lovely Sunday morning. RSVP by email to [npscsec@gmail.com](mailto:npscsec@gmail.com) so we know you are coming and can let you know if there is any change to arrangements.



**Julie Nimmo and the NPQ Sunshine Coast Executive 0431961046 RSVP to [npscsec@gmail.com](mailto:npscsec@gmail.com)**



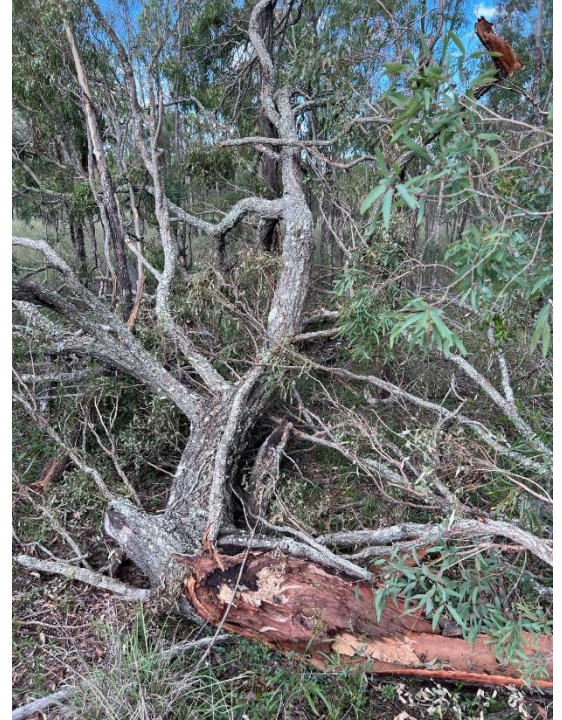
## KABOOM!

Text and photos by Anne Windsor

Recently, despite it being El Niño, the South Burnett has had a wonderful amount of rain. Nothing like the gallons that fall on the Sunshine Coast, but great for the countryside out Kingaroy way. The expected



downside to the rain is, of course, the weeds, and they never disappoint, but after the most recent cloudburst we made an unexpected discovery. One of our very large Narrow-leaved Ironbarks, *Eucalyptus crebra*, had its top completely removed courtesy of a lightning strike. I've never seen lightning separate the entire top of a tree from its bottom half, so it was quite an awesome sight. 'KABOOM' was really the only thing I could think when I saw it. Most of the canopy fell but some remains, precariously hanging off an upper branch.



The neighbouring smaller trees, not surprisingly, took quite a bit of damage. And the tree's resident mistletoe *Dendrophoe glabrescens* is doomed. It will be interesting to see if the upper part of the tree recovers and resprouts. And if not, there are plenty more Ironbarks in the paddock. A final note - the large clump growing below the Ironbark is *Jasminum simplicifolium* subsp. *australiense*, Stiff Jasmine.



A neighbouring tree is damaged



Foliage and fruit of *Eucalyptus crebra*



## ***Commersonia bartramia* - Brown Kurrajong**

By Spencer Shaw

The Brown Kurrajong is a widespread and common tree of the Sunshine Coast, popping up in reasonably fertile areas in a range of ecosystems including rainforest edges, wet sclerophyll woodland and even coastal woodland. They are fast growing pioneers who start life as a tiny seed only 2-3mm across, but can grow a metre or more per year once established reaching a height of up to 25 metres, but more commonly seen at 10 metres or less on the Sunshine Coast.

*Commersonia bartramia* belongs to what was the Sterculiaceae family but now in the Byttneriaceae family ... in Queensland at least! Other *Commersonia* in our area include *Commersonia fraseri* (Glasshouse Mountains and Glenview), *Commersonia salviifolia* (Buderim) and *Commersonia viscidula* (Mt Tinbeerwah).

Bark is greyish brown to dark grey, younger branches are smooth with raised spots (lenticels). Mature bark becomes rougher and greyer. Leaves are simple, alternate up to 14cm long and 3cm wide, and the margins are shallowly toothed. The upper surface is green and hairless, while the lower surface is a yellowish grey and covered with hairs, almost velvety. The flowers are white and born en-masse and the soft spiky fruit themselves are no good for the birds, but they do open into 5 segments, which allows access for birds with delicate beaks to reach the tiny seed - well actually the fatty bit of fruit that is stuck on the seed.



***Commersonia bartramia* - flowers**



***Commersonia bartramia* – unripe fruit**

Seed are ripe now (from January onwards) and available for a few months just waiting for those delicately beaked birds to come along and spread them! If you're going to have a go at growing them yourself, the seed require scarification, which can be achieved by a boiling water soak or rubbing between two sheets of sandpaper.



# Gardening Under Established Eucalypts

Text and photos by Robert Price

In answer to Maria's question about growing plants successfully under eucalypts, we can take cues from the natural world. Two types of forest common here on the Sunshine Coast are wet sclerophyll and dry sclerophyll. The first is defined by having a canopy provided by hard leaved trees (as opposed to rainforest trees) with an understory of rainforest plants, often found in high rainfall regions. The canopy trees will be a mix of Eucalypts, Corymbias, Lophostemons, Angophoras and Syncarpias, usually growing fairly close together. It is considered to be in transition to rainforest, as eucalypt etc. seed will find it difficult to germinate under these conditions. To create something similar in your garden, simply spread plenty of compost onto the soil (maybe 100 mm deep) but not up around tree trunks, mulch well, add slow-release fertilizer regularly, and plant up with your favourite rainforest understory plants: shrubs such as *Atractocarpus chartaceus*, *Cryptocarya laevigata*, *Graptophyllum spinigerum*, *Uromyrtus tenella*, *Gossia acmenoides*, etc. The choice is large. At ground level, ferns, *Alpinia spp.*, *Viola spp.* etc. will look good. Another option is to plant rainforest trees with attractive foliage – *Diploglottis spp.*, *Davidsonia spp.*, *Beilschmedia spp.*, etc. – and prune hard occasionally to prevent them getting tall, thus mimicking nature where seedlings remain in dormancy awaiting a gap in the canopy.



In dry sclerophyll forest, the canopy trees are more widely spaced allowing plenty of light to reach the forest floor. Do something similar with compost, but not too rich; don't use chicken manure. If the light is good enough, shrubs such as pea flowers (*Pultanaea*, *Jacksonia*, etc.), *Banksia*, *Dodonaea*, and *Acacia* should work, with an understory of *Hibbertia spp.*, *Dianella*, *Eustrephus*, *Xanthorrhoea*, maybe some Cycads such as *Macrozamia lucida* or *Lepidozamia peroffskyana*. If the soil is able to be kept a little moister, use *Callistemons*, *Melaleucas*, *Leptospermums* etc., but again, the light needs to be just lightly dappled, as it often is under eucalypts.

When buying a property, especially acreage, we often inherit land that has been cleared of understory with some trees left. Many people prefer a park-like look which they maintain by



mowing. By referring to books like *Mangroves to Mountains* or *Noosa's Native Plants* by Stephanie Haslam, we can find many plant species listed under vegetation types like dry eucalypt forest, wallum woodlands etc., and group them in plantings appropriate to the conditions we have, or can create.

## **Native fig paste for Christmas** by Julie Nimmo

- preferred species for jam are *Ficus coronate* and *Ficus opposita*

A tree full of figs was too hard to resist. It was time to investigate the fig recipes to see if the sandpaper figs were edible. Eating native foods is a challenge in preparation, so with some foods, whilst you can eat them, would you? The answer to this question for fig paste was definitely yes!

Jan Sked in 'Go Native – Wild Food Cookbook' (1985, reprint 2018)<sup>1</sup> provides a recipe for Native Fig Jam for which she recommends, in summary: 500g native figs, a half cup of orange juice, 500g of sugar grated ginger and ¼ cup of water. Cook, simmer and set.

Our tree didn't deliver anything like 500g fruit all at once, but enough for fig paste on Christmas Day. We had to perch on the culvert batter to collect - where the tree was growing well with a reliable source of water. We gathered enough to make a cup of fig paste which was a ratio of 3:1 figs to sugar with juice of 1 lemon. Figs were squashed, mashed, stirred and mixed with sugar in the saucepan over low heat until fully mixed. Lemon juice and a little water added so the mix didn't burn. Once the lovely deep red mix was ready, it was cooled in the fridge and then decanted to small containers. We will be planting another *Ficus coronate* in an easier to access location - and look forward to more fig paste in the future.



**Fig paste removed from the mould**

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Sked in 'Go Native – Wild Food Cookbook' (1985, reprint 2018) is available from Pine Rivers branch of Native Plants Queensland. *F. opposita* and *coronata* should be available at local native nurseries.

## The Answer is Blowing in the Wind By Spencer Shaw

When it comes to seed dispersal, you may invariably think of those gaudy members of the plant kingdom who use birds to spread their seed by hiding them in a fruit. It could be said that these plants were the first beings to master the art of advertising. That is to say - the art of making you believe that you just must have their fruit, no matter how low the food value, because it's such a lovely colour! Sure, some fruits are relatively nutritious and the lucky bird that's eaten them can roost on a warm sunny branch and relax while the digestive processes take place. However, many fruit are designed to pass straight through digestive systems as quickly as possible leaving birds feeling hungry and having to eat even more fruit – how devious!

Before you go thinking how superior you are and how dumb birds are for getting themselves trapped in a vicious circle like that, may I remind you that at least the birds only get sucked in by the advertisers when it comes to food...

Then there are those free spirits of the botanical kingdom who use wind power!

Ferns and mosses were amongst the earliest of plants and produce spores that are wholly spread by wind. Tree fern spore is particularly good at getting about. Now I don't want you to panic but you're probably inhaling some at the moment, its everywhere! Fern spore will germinate on any moist, shady and bare patch of soil which is great for all you revegetators out there because ferns will turn up in your patch of developing forest all by themselves when the conditions become right. The Daisy family Asteraceae is big on wind dispersal with exotics such Spear Thistle, *Cirsium vulgare*, making the most of the breeze to move across the countryside, but also natives such as Sago Bush, *Ozothamnus diosmifolius*, get around thanks to the wind. Moving onto the trees, some familiar examples are the ancient conifers (excluding the Bunya of course) whose flat seeds are blown about in the summer storms. Similarly, the fine seed of eucalypts are released to float on the breeze after a bush fire or storm damage. Other rainforest trees that are wind dispersed include Bump Ash *Flindersia schottiana*, Crows Ash *Flindersia australis*, White Booyong *Argyrodendron trifoliatum*, Black Booyong



*Argyrodendron* sp. kin kin



*Stenocarpus sinuatus*

*Argyrodendron actinophyllum*, Bronze Booyong *Argyrodendron* sp kin kin, Sassafras *Doryphora sassafras*, Wheel of Fire *Stenocarpus sinuatus* and many more.

The great limitation of wind dispersal is of course the wind itself. After all, what happens if a few weeks of calm weather sets in when you've got a big crop of fruit on! Also, unless your seed is particularly small then you're going to be lucky if your seed goes any further than a kilometre. This poses a big problem for the spread and maybe survival of some of the wind dispersed species in the fragmented forests of Southeast Queensland. When it comes to tree planting, we should make sure these species are on our planting lists particularly if no parent trees of the same species appear close by.



## Birdwing butterflies

The butterflies are enjoying the hot humid weather.



Richmond Birdwing butterfly – male  
Photo by Maria Rosenfelder



Butterflies mating  
Photo by Dan Johnston



Richmond Birdwing caterpillar  
Photo by Maria Rosenfelder

## Meeting Reports

**October Meeting** was a workshop by Esther about plant photography using a mobile phone.



## November Meeting

**Last meeting of the year - November 2023 - Next meeting 12 February 2024 10am at Mary Cairncross.**

Our Christmas meeting and the last meeting for the year was a talk followed by a catered lunch/morning tea from 11am. Joan Heavey, author and Bushcare volunteer, active for more than 20 years on the Sunshine Coast and a member of Noosa Integrated Catchment Association, Noosa & District Landcare, Noosa Parks Association (coordinator of the Botany Group), and NPQSC was our speaker. Joan provided a fantastic illustrated talk on galls, which are malformations caused by the stimulus of an insect, fungal or bacterial attack, nematode worms, mistletoe, as well as physical injury. Our hosts were Spencer and Karen Shaw who welcomed us to Forest Heart ecoNursery – your ultimate destination for native plants and a haven of biodiversity nestled within the breath-taking landscapes of the Sunshine Coast Hinterland on Jinibara Country. Thanks to Joan, Spencer and Karen.

Throughout the year we have had exciting speakers, presenters and site visits. I appreciate the wonderful contribution from the many people who have contributed to our monthly (seasonally adjusted) events and of course our enthusiastic participants. Stay tuned for our forthcoming events and meetings, especially the AGM on February 12th at Mary Cairncross starting at 10am. Our guest speaker will talk about the role of native vegetation in catchment management. Information to be emailed shortly.

Julie Nimmo, Events Coordinator and the NPSC Executive.





## Some interesting plants in Maria's garden





Thanks to Anne Windsor, Robert Price, Julie Nimmo, Maria Rosenfelder and Spencer Shaw for their contributions to this newsletter.

### **End of Banksia Bytes 33**



Lichen encrusted branch from the fallen canopy of Anne's ironbark