

Coffs Harbour Group NEWSLETTER No.151: April 2021



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APS Coffs Harbour Membership **Membership renewal is due!**

We warmly welcome our new members:
Gary Clark and Jamie Williams

APS NSW Website

www.austplants.com.au
Keep up-to-date with news, program of outings and meetings via our pages:
www.austplants.com.au/Coffs-Harbour

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## Larry Corbett: Botanists' Walk, North Coast Regional Botanic Garden

The soon to be completed Botanists' Walk in the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden is a collection of plants to commemorate the botanists who have been collecting and classifying the native plants of the Australian continent for more than 300 years. From Dampier (who was not a botanist, but who collected the first specimens of Australian plants for European botanists to study) on the West Coast in 1699, and Banks and Solander on the East Coast in 1770, to the growing number of that botanists who have followed in their footsteps; including our very own Alex Floyd.

Consisting of two sections, one for NSW plants and the other for QLD plants, the collection is a series of interconnected garden beds accessed via a meandering paved brick path. The NSW collection starts with two beds of raised mounds of sandstone sand mixed with the pre-existing soil, into which sandstone rocks have been embedded and then covered with a light coloured pebble mulch to match the rocks.



(L) APS members inspecting NSW 1<sup>st</sup> Bed (R) NSW 2<sup>nd</sup> Bed

These beds have been mostly planted with shrubs of the sandstone and granite ranges, and coastal sand heaths of the mid north coast region, with a view to include as many rare and endangered species, and unusual forms of naturally occurring species as possible. These plants have then been inter-planted with a number of ornamental groundcovers, mostly from our region, to enhance the overall visual/aesthetic appeal of the collection.

The second bed in the NSW section has a range of plants more commonly found in forests and woodland areas of the mid north coast, and as such the beds contain less sand mixed through the existing soil. This bed has also been contoured to flow into the pre-existing garden behind it, and has been covered with tea-tree mulch to match and assimilate the two beds, to create the appearance of one. Of particular note here are three different species of grasstrees, some with trunks of more than a metre in height, and inter-planted with a number of other shrubs and groundcovers.



*Queensland Section adjacent to (L) NSW Grasstrees (R) Pond*

The QLD section is still under construction, but consists of a single long bed with mounds and large bluestone rocks, and which leads to a pond with a small viewing deck. The QLD plants, which are yet to be planted, are a more eclectic mix. They consist of some rainforest and wetland species that will be planted in and around the pond, and a range of mostly forest and woodland species throughout the long bed. However, the overall concept of having rare and endangered, and unusual forms of naturally occurring species, interspersed with ornamental groundcover plants applies in this area as well. The official opening for the Botanists' Walk is the last week of May, so expect to see a flurry of activity on the site over the next few months as it nears completion.

### **Barry Kemp\*: Native of Where??** (\*AKA Grumpy Old Man)

Having had a recent need to arrange for flowers to be delivered interstate, I find I now have frequent unsolicited emails from a website which recently had a special on "natives". The example arrangements of "Australian Wildflowers" are almost invariably about 80% African (Protea, Leucospermum and Leucadendron). While these are very showy flowers and look good in floral arrangements, they are **not** Australian plants. A "bush lawyer" may say they are natives, just not of Australia!

This is not an original gripe and I'm sure most actual florists (and most of their customers) don't know the difference.

When floral bouquets for the 2000 Olympics were under consideration, Australian growers of African flowers tried to contribute, but you may recall that the organisers were eventually convinced that they should settle for truly Australian plants, like Waratah (*Telopea*), flannel flower (*Actinotus helianthi*), some Banksias, Kangaroo paws (*Anigozanthos*) and I think some *Grevillea baileyana* leaves.

**Editor:** *National Eucalyptus Day* celebrated this year with wonderful images, including this one from Guy Leung.



**Colin Broadfoot's visit to Arakoon National Park**

by Robert Watt, with assistance from Barry Kemp

Home to the historic Trial Bay Gaol, Arakoon is 5 km east of South West Rocks. Colin began with photos of some outstanding beaches and pointed out the breakwater built by the convicts. The vegetation includes wet eucalypt forests in the sheltered creeks and gullies with dense stands of melaleucas along creek edges. Exposed areas, such as the north and west faces of Monument Hill provide a dramatic contrast to the wetter areas with the low stunted natives of heathland, including casuarina, banksia, persoonia and dogwood species. This vegetation has, of course, evolved to cope with the extreme exposure of salt and wind. The grasslands are another important feature.

Of significant importance to the flora is the fact that the conservation area stands on geological formations made up mainly of granite known as Smokey Cape adamellite. This granite was quarried to build the gaol and the breakwater.

Some of the flora Colin included in his photographs were:

- ***Scaevola aemula*** (fan flower), grows in granite sand and can be found broadly across the Park.
- ***Paterstonia sericea*** (silky purple flag) is one of the most common of the 20 species running from north-eastern Victoria to South-eastern Queensland in grassland, woodland and open forest. The leafless flower stems can get to 40 cm, range in colour from blue to purple and the flower lasts only a day. The leaves are only 30 cm and come from a clump at the base, which can, in the home garden, be divided for new plants.
- ***Xerochrysum bracteatum*** (everlasting daisies) in profusion on the path. An interesting Australian plant – the first daisy to be cultivated and hybridized by German botanists in the 1850s and was quickly popular in Europe shortly thereafter, with many different forms and colours in the catalogues.
- ***Plectranthus cremnus*** – in abundance and maybe because of the work done to this area when still the Arakoon State Conservation Area and money was found to fight bitou bush in 2010-11. *P. cremnus* headed the list of native flora at risk in this area from bitou bush. Colin noted that the flower was popular to blue-banded bees.
- ***Jacksonia scoparia*** (dogwood), a beautiful yellow pea flower, best cultivated by cuttings.
- ***Hakea teretifolia*** (dagger hakea), with its unusual woody fruits and spiky leaves, also grows here. This vegetation has evolved to cope with extreme exposure to the salt and wind. The name comes from the unusual seed pod. The plant attracts honeyeaters and gives protection to small birds.
- ***Alyxia ruscifolia***, grows on the coast from Wollongong north to tropics, with many spikes but perfumed white flower. When asked about propagation, Colin spoke in terms of being relatively easy to grow from cuttings but taking at least three years to get to a 'sellable' size makes it unviable for the professional plant supplier.
- ***Melaleuca nodosa***, grows mainly on the NSW and Queensland coast, with spectacular globular-shaped cluster of yellow. Untidy habit and spiky. Relatively easy to propagate.
- ***Smilax glycyphylla*** (sweet sarsaparilla) – a climber native to eastern Australia. Black single seed and used by Indigenous and early settlers to make a tea-like drink. Photo shows climbing plant over *Alyxia ruscifolia*.
- ***Syzygium smithii*** – while usually growing 15-20 m, in Colin's photograph we have an example of 1-2 m because of the site on the headland. However, maintains the characteristic of usually not being subject to attack by the serious pest lilly pilly psyllid (*Trioza eugeniae*).
- ***Banksia oblongifolia*, prostrate form.** The photo shown by Colin was of a very low, compact example. While normally growing to a metre, the conditions on the headland have created this very low plant. Cultivation could well keep it low.
- ***Dampiera stricta*** – also called the Blue dampiera, although the flower can also be mauve. Grows 30 cm high and can get to be 1 m across. A common local cultivar is "Glasshouse Glory". Propagation from seed unreliable but cuttings from suckering stems tends to work.
- ***Podolepis neglecta*** is an attractive, perennial daisy, which can be found on north coast headlands.
- **The fruit of the *Synoum glandulosum*** (Scentless rosewood) is a distinctive red colour.
- **The fruit of *Pittosporum revolutum*** (Rough-fruited Pittosporum) is a distinctive red and yellow.
- **Grasses:** the themedas, including ***Themeda triandra*** (kangaroo grass) grow well on the exposed headland site. They tend to have a blue/gray colouring. One of the popular cultivars is "Mingo", particularly because it is low growing with a blueish foliage and is sterile. Another

popular headland grass is *Poa labillardieri*, an attractive tussock grass with fine long leaves in gray-green and feathery flower heads in summer. A particular cultivar recommended by Colin was “Eskdale”.

The meeting thanked Colin for his most informative talk and excellent photographs that accompanied the presentation. The site will hopefully be on the 2022 outings list.



(L) *Themeda triandra*; (M) *Melaleuca nodosa*; (R) *Podolepis neglecta*

### **Citizen Science Project Opportunity**

My name is Lauren Bassett and I am a research assistant to Professor David Phalen with the University of Sydney. We are currently looking to conduct a citizen science project in southern QLD and northern NSW to identify the cause of Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome. This disease occurs in wild rainbow lorikeets and causes the birds to become paralysed and unable to fly. Rainbow lorikeets with the disease require intensive care and long-term rehabilitation, wearing on the resources of both veterinarians and wildlife carers. Currently the cause of this disease is unknown but is theorised to be due to a toxic plant that occurs in southern QLD and northern NSW that the lorikeets are ingesting.

The objective of the project is to collect as many observations from people in and around the southern QLD and northern NSW area as possible about the plant species on which wild rainbow lorikeets are feeding on in an effort to identify what plants or other food sources researchers should sample and test in further studies. Citizen scientists will be required to send through the location of the plant and three pictures (one of the whole tree/plants, one of the leaves, and one of the fruit/flower). However, to make this possible, photos of the plants sent in will need to be identified, either to genus or species level.

I am emailing you to see whether you would be interested in becoming involved in the project as a stakeholder? This would involve disseminating information about the project to members within the study site, and once data is being received, identify individuals that would be willing to assist in the identification of plant species. The project is still in the process of being set up and will not be available to collect observations for potentially another month or two.

If you'd like to participate or know someone who would, would you please let me know via email ([ibas9859@alumni.sydney.edu.au](mailto:ibas9859@alumni.sydney.edu.au)) and I can send more information through or we can have a meeting to discuss the project further.

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Contributions to Newsletters can be sent to
jan64garden@gmail.com
Next due date for articles is 16 July 2021