



Newsletter

Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens

2016 No 8

The heat is on! It is nearly Christmas and many of the plants at the Botanic Gardens are joining in the festive spirit. They are decorating themselves with berries, blooms and new growth. What a delight to see. Enjoy your festive times everyone.



What gorgeous baubles to be seen...



I am the flower of the Leichhardt Tree *Nauclea orientalis*.

My distinctive yellow flowers resemble spiky round baubles.
I'm one of Nature's Christmas Decorations.

Flowering now, I will soon change to an edible fruit, which will look similar to a dirty golf ball. The fruit, can be eaten raw, has a slightly bitter taste and not too dissimilar to mushy banana. The flesh and the small black seeds are eaten, the skin being discarded.

Wishing it was 'Snow in Summer'...

I am the flowers of this Brown Kurrajong, Bush Christmas Tree
Commersonia bartramia

My distinctive flowers resemble lots of tiny stars.
I'm one of Nature's Christmas Decorations

I'm an important species in rainforest regeneration as I can grow rapidly and survive exposed conditions. I'm a small tree up to 20 -25 m with a shady, umbrella-like canopy, foliage in horizontal layers and a "snowy" appearance when flowering.



I am the fruit of the Water Apple, Watery Rose –apple *Syzygium aqueum*



My distinctive red fruits resemble tiny bells.
I'm one of Nature's Christmas Decorations.

My fruit is very glossy red and the flesh is very juicy or watery hence my common name, Water Apple.

I grow on a shrub and I grow best in areas with a long dry season, though I am not drought resistant. Shrubs like this one can easily be cultivated in home gardens so why not add some Christmas cheer to your place?

Our *Syzygium aqueum* in the Gardens is abundant in fruit both on the plant and on the ground. The Red

Whiskered Bulbul bird has been seen feasting on the fallen fruit.

There was fun for all the Family...

Christmas in the Gardens:



The rain downpour in the afternoon may have kept some people away, but over 2,000 people were part of Christmas in the Gardens. It was held at a new time and a new place, Friday 16th December at the Meadowlands Amphitheatre.



The night featured a range of local entertainers including Anette Worthington who was joined for a few songs with her grandchildren, Jade Fiyen, Pelican Zen Duo (Karen Bonham and Jennifer Emmett) and Nikki Vella-Power. The Emcees for the night were Jay and Dave from Sea MMM.

Another new addition to the Christmas in the Gardens were food stalls, available from 5.30pm and included Munchie Busters, Mackay Host Lions Food Van, Willy's Wood fired Pizza and pre-ordered Picnic baskets from Lagoons Café. Run For MI Life sold Glow Sticks and Flameless candles and a lot of picnic blankets too. Free face painting from Sensory Circus tribe was very popular. A great night!

Congratulations to Simone Mellor (Botanic Gardens Administration officer) for coordinating such a fabulously successful night of entertainment.



We are having a break... Are you?

The Botanic Gardens are open to the community all day every day (excluding the **Tropical Shade Garden** which is closed when Administration staff are not in attendance)

The **MRBG Administration** and **The Garden's Shop** are closed during the Christmas period... Closed from 2.30pm Friday 23rd December – reopening on Tuesday 3rd January at 9.00am.



Lagoon's Cafe and **Lagoons Gallery** will be closed during the Christmas period too...
Closed From Saturday 24th December – reopening on Wednesday 4th January 2017 at 10.00am



Looking for something else FREE to do away from the hustle and bustle over the festive season? Try “Nature’s Christmas Decorations”

School Holiday Quiz at the Botanic Gardens.

Wander through the Botanic Gardens and find some of Nature’s decorations for Christmas. Find nature’s bells, baubles, stars and maybe a candle or two. There will be some questions to answer and some other hidden sparkly Christmas decorations just for fun. How many will you find?

Quizzes are available at the Botanic Gardens or online on the Botanic Gardens website.
www.mackayregionalbotanicgardens.com.au

Have you seen it yet?

‘Near and Far’... An Exhibition by the Creative Shots Photo Club



Wednesday 14th December – Sunday 22th January 2017

When the members of the Creative Shots Photo Club developed the theme of ‘**Near and Far**’, they wanted to create something that sparked a conversation for people.

This theme isn’t about following one specific technique or photography type to succeed. Instead, it’s about understanding what it means

– and demonstrating that through their photographic work.

‘**Near and Far**’ could represent a back-and-forth between landscapes captured here in Mackay or somewhere else in the world. It could feature a subject with a close-up shot as well as a zoomed out impression of the same thing. The sky’s the limit when it comes to how the subject is interpreted. And that means you will be able to enjoy an exciting display of photos that will all be distinct to each photographer. As usual, our selections come from our members across a vast range of skills, experience, knowledge and camera equipment.

Visitors to the exhibition are also encouraged to vote for the image they feel best illustrates the theme “Near and Far”. Always welcoming new members, you can find out more about the Creative Shots Photo Club at www.creativeshots.com.au. Cost: Free Image: Sky Fire by David Phillips

Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens Lagoons Gallery is open Wednesday to Friday 10 am - 3pm and Weekends from 9am - 4pm.

Please note* Lagoons Gallery is CLOSED during the Christmas period Saturday 24th December 2016 – Wednesday 4th January 2017.

Please note: Some of our regular events may not be on offer during the December / January Holiday period.



SGAP (Society for Growing Australian Plants) Mackay Branch: February is their first meeting for 2017. Meetings are at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens; 1st Thursday of every month 7.30pm.

There are no School Holiday activities available in January 2017... WHY?

Congratulations to Margaret Lane:

At the Botanic Gardens Christmas Party on Thursday 15th December, Margaret Lane was awarded the Friends of the Gardens SHINY SHOVEL award.



There was the usual list of clues so people at the function had to guess who the awardee was...

"This person wears glasses, loves a good coffee, goes to the gym and Pilates, member of friends, play bridge, wants to sketch every gum nut, member of SGAP, and other clues but the one that clichéd it was ...learnt Latin at school."

Margaret has been very involved in the Plant Label project as a member of the TAG TEAM... Margaret has joined Ross Demuth on both occasions when he was commissioned by the Friends to do a Plant Audit of the Gardens. Margaret has also continued with her mission to tag every plant (white tag at the base of the plant) so in the future the plants will be able to be easily identified when plant labels need to be placed or renewed.

Margaret plans to continue with the Plant Label project in 2017.
Thank you Margaret for your fabulous enthusiasm for the Gardens.



Small Explorers... Christmas Decorations in the Gardens.



After two stories about Christmas decorations, the children went exploring to find not only Nature's Decorations but also some carefully placed colourful baubles.

What did we find? Beehive Gingers, the tiny figure of the Christmas orchid, beautiful star shaped flowers that smelled divine from the Ornate-fruited Neisosperma, dozens of North Queensland Day moths resting on leaves, Native Plumbago star shaped flowers and the red star shape of the opened fruit of the Red Beech (see below) all in the Tropical Shade Garden.

The meeting room was a cool spot to make our own Christmas mobiles with painted and glittered leaves and twigs to hang them from. It was a hive of activity!

Sadly for Maya Harrison, this would be her last Small Explorers session.



I am the fruit of this Red Beech *Dillenia alata*

My distinctive fruit resemble red stars.

I'm one of Nature's Christmas Decorations.

My flowers are bright yellow and only last for one day, but are replaced daily for one to two months in late spring and summer. The open fruit reveal bright red valves and white waxy seeds. The large ovate leaves are an attractive glossy, dark green colour, while new leaves are reddish brown.

alata ... means bearing a flattened, wing-like structure, referring to the winged petioles (leaf stalk).

December School Holiday activities:



There were creative times at the Botanic Gardens for Maya's last school holiday sessions.

Leaves, sticks, some paint and glitter turned items from Nature into beautiful decorations.

No School Holiday activities in January 2017! Why?

Maya Harrison, who has conducted these sessions for over 8 years, will be leaving her role (Visitors Services Officer/ Education Officer /Exhibitions Officer) on Friday Dec 23rd. Maya says that it has been a pleasure to introduce people, especially children to the fascinating wonders of Nature, those Bungee Jumping Caterpillars and the wonderful green space that is the Botanic Gardens.

Some lovely comments from Facebook...

From Amy... Thank you Maya for all your wonderful work. My boys (Riley & Harper) have enjoyed the gardens & holiday programs many times. Wishing you the best for your next adventure!



From Sarah (Small Explorers participant)... Maya, we are going to miss you so much. The children and I loved every moment of your morning sessions. Thank you for the most amazing experiences we could ever have experienced in such a beautiful place. The hidden bugs and bell shaped flowers, rolling down hills and playing in the leaves. ❤️ SJI Childcare (Inspired family scheme)



Maya has thoroughly enjoyed her Small Explorers programs, School holiday activities and School education sessions and knows that many children have been introduced to Nature through those interactions.

"I loved the fact that I have encouraged children to roll down grassy hills, slide in a mountain of leaves, jump in puddles and wipe their hands on their clothes as well as being able to observe interesting creatures up close and experience Nature in a joyous way"



Maya (sometimes called "the bug lady") was often seen in the Gardens peering into the bushes searching for creatures to show to children and adults alike. Maya even went further afield to her own bush acreage to collect creatures that most people might just pass by. Tadpoles from her creek were such a hit. The tadpoles were very large and became Great Barred Frogs.



Showing children how to share and hold all the creatures gently on their fingers or their hands was an activity that Maya loved to do.

...and who could forget the butterfly house experience?



... Don't forget those
Bungee Jumping Caterpillars!

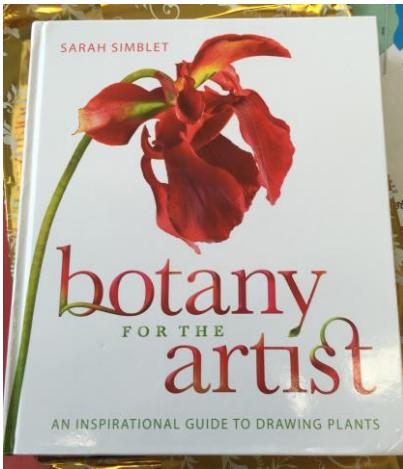
Carolyn, Kate and Maya created a wonderful children's book inspired by the North Queensland Day Moth and the caterpillar that drops on a thread...
(Available at The Garden's Shop)



Maya has especially loved the opportunity to learn so much about the Plant world from such knowledgeable people as Meryl Ritchie, Irene Champion, Dale Arvidsson and Ross Demuth.

Maya will especially miss the 'finding a plant ID' races between herself and Simone Mellor...Google or a book?





Maya would also like to say 'Thank you' to Simone for purchasing such a lovely gift as a farewell present (beautifully wrapped) and presented after a delicious lunch at the Lagoons Café.

Being a bookaholic, a book is always a great surprise for Maya and she already has plans to share this fabulous book with the Botanical Art Interest Group (BAIG) members in the New Year. The book will certainly inspire some more artistic works in the future.

The sketch by Maya is the Native Plumbago *Plumbago zeylanica*. Not leaving the Botanic Gardens entirely, Maya will have an exhibition in the Lagoons Gallery in April 2017.



I am the flowers of the Pink Phyllanthus *Phyllanthus cuscutiflorus*



My distinctive clusters of flowers resemble strands of tinsel decorated with tiny stars / bells.

I'm one of Nature's Christmas Decorations.

One of the less well known screening or hedge plants, I am a very hardy fast growing shrub to 4m that bears masses of petite pink flowers on long stalks that hang beneath the branches like Christmas decorations. I'm fast growing and will maintain my foliage to the ground. New growth has a copper pink tone and the general leaf tone is pale green.

I am the fruit / berries of the Giant Palm Lily *Cordyline manners-suttoniae*

My distinctive berries resemble lots of coloured baubles.

I'm one of Nature's Christmas Decorations

I'm a palm lily native to coastal Queensland, where I'm found in rainforests, often in swampy situations.

In spring or summer, I produce an attractive panicle of white flowers, followed by cascades of bright berries which transform in colour from green, yellowish green, sometime pinkish to red.



The Botanic Gardens would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Fantastic Festive time and a brilliant New Year.

Thank you for all your contributions to the Gardens, both large and small.

Need more information about anything in this newsletter...

Contact the Botanic Gardens on 49527300 or email botanic@mackay.qld.gov.au

