

Newsletter

Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens

2015 No 3

It still feels like we are in the grip of Summer, but welcome rain has brought us some relief. Enjoy the latest from 'The Botanic Gardens'...

What have the Friends of the Gardens been up to?

The "Friends Meeting Place" continues to be successful in many ways. The social aspect of 'Friends' getting to know each other is a great part of the morning, but more importantly is the opportunities for both the Friends and The Gardens to benefit. How?



The Tropical Shade Garden now proudly boasts a complete set of new labels for each plant species. This garden is very popular for visitors and holds some of our special plants, so it is wonderful that the plants now have very visible and legible names.

It was definitely a learning curve for the group to find the plants and match their labels, especially with a variety of species of the one genus.

The old dilapidated labels were removed... a bucketful of them.



A treat in the Shade Garden was the hordes of blue tiger butterflies resting in the shaded areas and looking like leaves, until one fluttered. Others quickly joined in and the whole garden appeared to be floating with them.



So far every Friend's Meeting Place has had interesting and varied activities to do.



Friends processed the seed pods of the Whitsunday Cassia so SGAP could propagate the seeds for future native plant sales. Do you know how many seeds are in one pod? ...Lots !!!!! →

Laminating weed pictures and text was another successful operation and all were used the following weekend at the Weed and Feed event to help with Weed identification and removal.

← A guided walk to check out where the weeds were growing assisted Rebecca in collecting 5 weed samples for her horticulture / herbarium specimens. Cobblers Pegs collected on us too.



Lots of questions and ponderings always happen as we discover and investigate the Gardens. Why do the two *Sterculia quadrifida* → trees have differences in their leaves?

← What's on the back of leaves in the Timber Trees Arboretum?

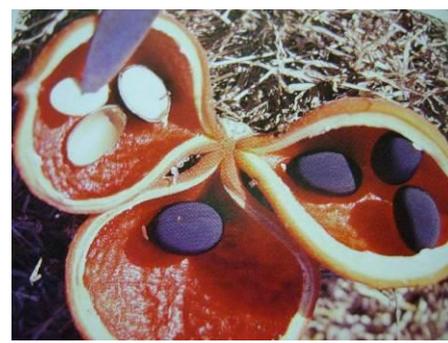


Our Friends are so versatile. On April 1st (and this is not an April Fool's joke) 6 Friends managed to sort a huge tub of maps and planting plans into their respective folders. We certainly know some of the features and areas of the Botanic Gardens now and that numbers don't always match... This activity was well received by our Acting Curator Ross Demuth. April 15th is School Holidays, so Friends may like to join Maya and assist children in discovering eggs-traordinary surprises in the Gardens.



The “Friends Meeting Place” continues on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of every month throughout the year.

Plant Profile: Peanut Tree *Sterculia quadrifida*



Sterculia quadrifida, also known as the **peanut tree**, or **red-fruited kurrajong** is a small tree that grows in the rainforests, vine thickets and gallery forests of coastal Queensland.

The tree grows to a height of 5 –10 metres and has a spreading deciduous canopy. The bark is a light grey and the leaves are dark green and broad egg-shaped or sometimes heart-shaped at the base. The flowers, which are greenish-yellow are borne in small clusters. Can you see some flowering now at the Botanic Gardens?

The distinctive feature of the Peanut tree is the fruit. The fruits are clusters of large, leathery, egg or boat-shaped pods up to 8 cm long which, change from green to an eye-catching red at maturity. From August to December, the attractive, eye catching red-orange seed pods which split open to reveal a similar-coloured lining.

Attached to this lining are a number of jet-black seeds, about the size and shape of a peanut kernel or a tiny egg shape

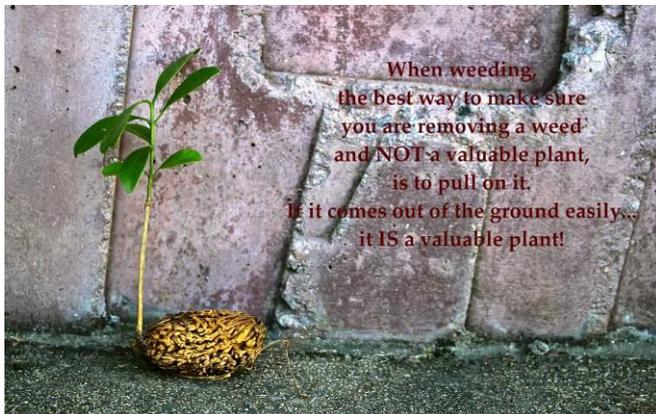
The creamy white centre of these seeds can be eaten raw and has a pleasant peanut-like taste. The broad leaves were also used as a bush medicine, crushed and applied to open wounds and sores. The inner bark was boiled and the liquid used to bathe infected eyes. The fibre of the inner bark was also used to make twine or string.

Weed and Feed Guided Walk held on Saturday 21st March

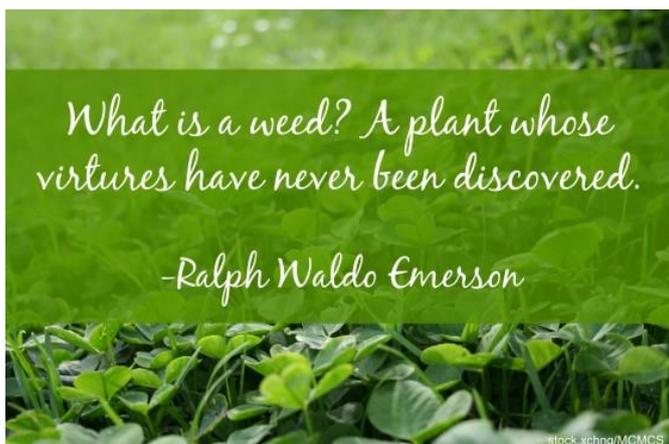


Garden Friends were able to do some Weed Identification using a collection of laminated pictures and information on weeds and some matching real life examples provided by Maya. Meryl and Ross added some information about the growing pattern of weeds, their seeds and ways of using common tools (screwdrivers, pliers and some weeders / mini matiks) to remove the stubborn and prickly ones.

This short activity assisted the Friends in knowing which plants were definitely weeds and which ones to pull out as they set off through the Regional FloraTerraces, Timber Tree Arboretum and Torres Strait Islander areas of the Botanic Gardens.



Ten large plastic bags were filled with weeds, but still more remain for another day, possibly the next Heritage Gardens Working Bee.



Friends were also shown how the Botanic Garden's protocols are serious about not introducing fungus, bacteria and other pests to the Gardens, when the Friend's home gardening tools were sprayed with a metho/ water combination before digging in any of our soils.



After all that hard work, some feeding of the masses was on the agenda. We hosted a BBQ at the Tamarind shelter (this shelter has lights) near the children's 'Under the Banyan PlayGarden' (with its colourful mosaics). BBQ meat, bread rolls and light drinks were provided. Friends brought along some wonderful salads and sweets to share. A successful, relaxed and enjoyable afternoon/ evening that made a big difference to the Botanic Gardens.

Thank you Friends for your wonderful help. Thanks to Veronique for the quotes.

WEEDS... Some of the common ones you may have in your garden.

Crows Foot Grass, Crab Grass

Eleusine indica

(Poaceae)

This is a tough exotic grass that often grows in disturbed areas and heavily trafficked / bare lawns. In ideal conditions, Crows Foot Grass can grow 30-40 cms tall – but is often seen as low and prostrate growing amongst other grasses.

Why is this plant a weed?

This grass will often grow 'where nothing else will' due to its strong roots, fibrous stems and leaves able to take heavy foot and vehicle traffic system and drought resistance. Crows foot then out-competes turf due to leaves shading the ground and seeds can be set on short inflorescences. The plants can set thousands of seed even when very small and often goes unnoticed in lawns until after it has set seed. The seed is extremely viable and is spread on shoes and via wind and water.

Control:

Hand removal is the best method or the judicious application of herbicide.



Sensitive weed

Mimosa pudica

(Polyodiaceae)

Sensitive Weed is a low, sprawling, perennial plant growing about 15 - 45 cm high. The plants features reddish-brown or purple, woody stems with sharp short curved prickles. Dark-green, fern-like leaves close up when disturbed. Flowers are pale pink or purplish pink in fluffy balls, 1 cm across which mature into clusters of seed pods 2-3 cm long with stiff bristles along edges and containing 1 - 5 seeds.



Why is it a weed? The seeds are spread by clinging to people, shoes, machinery and animals and remain viable for many years.

Sensitive Weed thrives in disturbed and cultivated areas, such as roadsides, vacant allotments and lawns and can tolerate shade.

Control: In lawns – encourage thick lawns: don't mow too short. Remove by hand (with gloves and tools), the herbicide Dicamba or Starane can be used especially for large and troublesome infestations. Thoroughly wet all leaf surfaces; if plants are disturbed before spraying, the leaves will fold up and the herbicide will be ineffective.

Creeping Indigo

Indigofera spicata
Fabaceae

Creeping Indigo is a short-lived herbaceous plant with creeping or scrambling stems. Its alternately arranged leaves are compound with 5 - 11 leaflets these oblong leaflets (5 - 25 mm long) have hairless or sparsely hairy upper surfaces and densely hairy undersides. Its small pink or pinkish-orange pea-shaped flowers (4 - 5 mm long) are arranged in elongated clusters up to 10 cm long its narrow cylindrical pods (15 - 25 mm long) are borne in a backwards facing position. It is very common weed of lawns, gardens, footpaths, roadsides, disturbed sites and waste areas.



Why is it a weed? This species reproduces by seed, which are probably dispersed by mowers and in contaminated soil. They may also be spread by water and in mud attached to animals and vehicles.

Control:
Hand removal is the best method



Cobblers Pegs

Bidens pilosa
(Asteraceae)



Cobblers Pegs is a weed usually to about 1 metre high of disturbed areas and bare garden beds. The plant may flower at any time of the year but is most dense with flowers and seeds mainly in late summer and autumn. Flowers are white with yellow centres.

Why is it a weed? The long black fruit have barbs that catch onto animals or clothing when brushed against, thus distributing the seed easily.

Control: Hand removal before fruiting is essential. Even large areas should be hand pulled, as herbicide can work slowly – allowing fruit to ripen and drop.

What are the Garden Friends doing this month?



Composting and Worm Farm workshop:

Saturday 18th April 10.00am - 12noon.

B.B.Q following

As 2015 is the Year of Soils this workshop will give us some understanding how to improve soils for best plant growth.

Meet at the Community Gardens Streeter St West Mackay (near Base Hospital) by 9.45am.

Compost is the single most important supplement you can give your garden soil. **Composting** is a simple way to add nutrient-rich humus which fuels plant growth and restores vitality to depleted soil. It's also free, easy to make and good for the environment

Luke Matthews from the Community Gardens will present the workshop which includes some practical / hands on involvement. (possibly bring gloves and don't wear your Sunday best clothes). The workshop will be for 2 hours with a ten minute break between the information and practice sections of the workshop.



Lunch will be held back at the Botanic Gardens Meeting Room where we ask that participants bring along a salad or sweet/ fruit to share. A B.B.Q will be available with bread rolls and meat provided.

Please R.S.V.P to Maya by Monday 13th April so catering can be organized.
Contact by phone 49527300 or email maya.harrison@mackay.qld.gov.au .

What's on... in the Botanic Garden's Lagoons Gallery? Nature's Reverse Pallet... an exhibition by Kim Bagot.



Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens Lagoons Gallery;
Wednesday 1st April – Sunday 3rd May 2015

As a Botanical Illustrator and an Environmental Scientist, Kim is intrigued by the beauty that plants display. The arrangement of leaves, the complexity of a flower or a combination of both, these are the architectural features of her illustrations.

The theme of Kim's exhibition is to create monochromatic impressions of the architectural features. Reversing the beauty of the colour to black and white, she achieves this through the traditional mediums used by the Botanical Illustrator, Graphite, Pen and Ink.

Kim uses mainly two techniques in her artworks, that of stippling for precise depiction of the plants features and secondly, graphite rendering to depict the natural softness of subject features.

Image: Hellabour Leaf.

Eggs-traordinary Easter Holiday Quiz at the Botanic Gardens



**Win
a \$50 gift card
+ the eggs-citing
“Bungee Jumping Caterpillars”
book.**

“Children will eggs-amine and eggs-plore places to eggs-pect eggs, while eggs-ercising and eggs-erting their body’s eggs-tremities in the eggs-terior!”

Eggs-cape the chocolate eggs and the hustle and bustle of the Easter holidays. Bring the whole family to the eggs-panding Botanic Gardens and pick up (or download)...an Eggs-traordinary Easter quiz

Quizzes are available at the Botanic Gardens or online on the Botanic Gardens website.

www.mackayregionalbotanicgardens.com.au

Completed quizzes can be returned to Botanic Gardens Administration.

Eggs-traordinary Easter Quiz winner drawn Friday 17th April 10.00am...
...at the start of the first Free Friday Guided Walk for 2015.

Free Friday Guided Walks are back... starting April 17th at 10am



The scenic Lagoons and glorious foliage make perfect backdrops during your informative stroll at the picturesque Botanic Gardens.

Join us 10.00 am Fridays (April 17th – October 30th) at the Administration Building. Once a month, a Special Themed Free Friday Guided walk is also available. Subscribe to Council’s ENewsletters for regular updates.

Free Friday Guided Walks at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens... **Every Friday 10.00am**

Let us know if you wish to come along to any of the walks by contacting the Botanic Gardens and booking the date with us or meet us at the Administration Building / The Garden’s Shop just before 10.00am.

Cost Free:

For more information... Contact the Botanic Gardens on 49527300 or email

botanic@mackay.qld.gov.au or visit the Botanic Gardens website

www.mackayregionalbotanicgardens.com.au

Eggs-citing Easter School Holidays at the Botanic Gardens



Can you crack the eggs code?

Eggs-pect an Eggs-traordinary Eggs-perience...

Tuesday 14th, Wednesday 15th, Thursday 16th April 2015: 10am - 12noon or 2pm – 4pm

Bookings essential!

“Children will **eggs-amine** things that **eggs-plode**, see signs of **eggs-tinct** animals, **eggs-plore** places to **eggs-pect eggs**, while **eggs-ercising** and **eggs-erting** their body’s **eggs-tremities** in the **eggs-terior**! **Eggs-haling**, but not **eggs-hausted** or **eggs-asperated**, return **eggs-hilarated** to **eggs-periment** with **eggs-travagant** and **eggs-otic** materials to create **eggs-quisite** decorated **eggs**.”

Eggs-clusive to school age children 5+: Only 10 children per session:

Eggs-actly from **10am - 12noon or 2pm – 4pm**

Not **eggs-pensive**, **just \$5.00** with no hidden **eggs-tras**, just slip slop slap, step out in shoes and bring your favourite beverage.

Eggs-press your **eggs-pectation** to join us and we **eggs-pect payment by Wednesday 8th April** .

Contact Botanic Gardens on 49527300 or email botanic@mackay.qld.gov.au to secure your child’s attendance. **There is still time to book.**

Harlequin bugs

Tectocoris diophthalmus

Harlequin bugs (various instars / nymphs)

Bright colours warn potential predators they smell & taste horrible.

Where would you find these egg laying True Bugs in the Botanic Gardens?



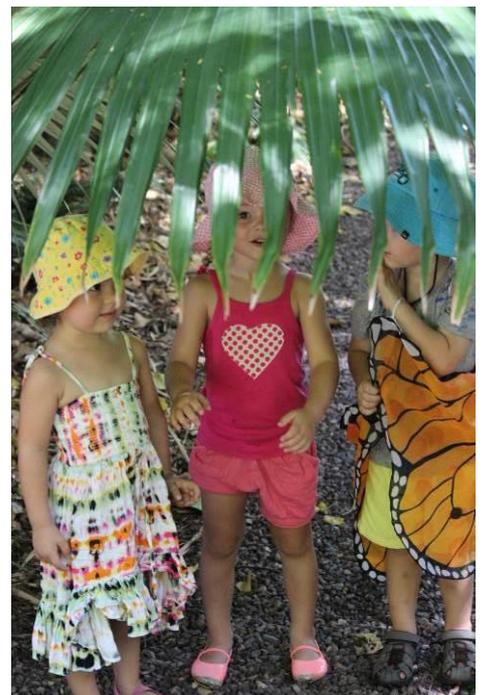
Small Explorers: First session for the Year held on Tuesday March 17th



24 young children along with grandparents, Family Day care providers and parents enjoyed the ever-popular 'Wildlife in the Gardens' session. It is always a delight to see children engaging with the natural world as they explore, sometimes getting surprised and jump with excitement.

Small Explorer's sessions are organised monthly with Visitors Services Officer, Maya Harrison for the public, but parents have also been organising private and more intimate Small Explorer sessions as well.

Some of the following images have captured the children's wonderment... These images were taken and shared by their appreciative parents.



Small Explorer sessions are fun and educational opportunities for toddlers and kindergarten aged children 18 months to 5 years held monthly or by appointment.

The next Small Explorers will be....

“Plant a Seed and Grow a Mind” on Tuesday April 28th: 9.30 am



Get fascinated by all sorts of seeds, big, small, spiny and smooth that become plants like the ones growing in our Botanic Gardens. The session includes story reading, making a recycled pot, planting a seed or two to take home and a small walk in the Gardens with Visitors Services Officer, Maya Harrison

Meet at the Meeting Room (opposite the Lagoons Café, closed Mondays and Tuesdays)

Let us know if you wish to come along by contacting the Botanic Gardens on 49527300 and booking the date with us. Tell a friend with young children so they can come too.

More children visited the Botanic Gardens too...



What have we discovered in the Gardens?

We are looking at lots of Blue Tiger butterflies, North Queensland Day moths and really big Golden Orb Spiders.

Have you seen them in the Tropical Shade Garden? Children from Good Start Learning Centre did. (March 30th)

So did 50 Year 1 children from Mackay North State School when they were learning about living things. (March 26th)



16 Year 9 students learning Japanese from Northern Beaches High School extended their knowledge about our Sister City, Matsuura and creative ways bamboo can be used... such as bridges, scaffolding, bike helmets, towels and even cars! (March 12th)



More experiences with Nature.



3 classes totalling 63 Year 1 children from St Francis Catholic school visited to learn about Habitats, Living Things and Creature Features.

Here a group of children are experiencing Nature's umbrella. (March 13th)

Plant-ed and Small Explorers also has an Outreach program, where education sessions can be done at centres. Maya travels to these centres with a host of resources and usually a horde of creatures.

Children from Kookaburra Child Care and Cubbie House Child Care were able to see insects and other small creatures brought to their centre by Maya. The children were inspired to check their own outdoor spaces for more creatures. (February 19th and March 11th)



It is not always young children who are having learning experiences at the Gardens, High school students and adults do too.

Start the Switch is a sustainability focus session for High School students and a display at TAFE assisted them in knowing the resources available to them and the Botanic Garden's focus on conservation especially of threatened in the wild species that grow in our bioregion. (March 5th)



(April 2nd)

A group of adults with low vision used some of their other senses (mainly hearing and touch) when they learnt about different birds, their nests and different feather types. A short walk to the Outlook deck gave them the opportunity to see and hear the many different bird sounds. Dusky Moorhens and Whistling Ducks were particularly vocal. The Botanic Gardens provides lots of learning experiences and opportunities for all ages.



You can get lots more information from... Regular updates by Subscribing to Council's ENews > http://www.mackay.qld.gov.au/about_council/newsletters

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