



Native Plants Capricornia

Cultivation - Conservation - Education



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New website: <https://nativeplantscapricornia.org.au/>

January 2019 Newsletter No. 209

Next Meeting – Friday 1st February – Frenchville State School Activity Centre

Guest Speaker



Michael Elgey, Curator of the Rockhampton Botanic Gardens and Kershaw Native Gardens

Topic:

Soil pathogens and effects on plants

Mike Elgey, recently appointed as the new Curator of the Rockhampton Botanic Gardens is our guest speaker at the next meeting. He comes to Rockhampton from the Sydney Botanic Gardens where he worked in a variety of roles, finally as the Horticultural Committee Chair. Michael is also a keen bush regenerator, volunteering in his spare time.

Photo: Daily Telegraph

Annual General Meeting is at 7:00 pm. Turn up hill at the traffic lights on Frenchville Road through the car park. We hope to see you there. Bring along your labelled specimens (if you know them), some cuttings for everyone to identify and any extra native seedlings. We will be running a plant raffle so bring along your spare coins.

Next Outing – Sunday 3rd February – Projects on Emu Parks fore-dunes

Revegetation veteran, John McCabe has offer to show us along a project at The Haven, Tanby Point, for some decades. The coastal scrubs at Emu Park are very diverse and accessible, offering so much inspiration for planting projects. Meet at Northside Plaza for carpooling at 2:30pm or at the Emu Park Lions Park, Yeppoon Road at 3:00pm. Contact: Neil Hoy 0439 943 281 / hoynd@optusnet.com.au

Last Outing – Sunday 2nd December

The last outing to Eichelberger Park, Frenchville was cancelled due to the extremely hot weather across Rockhampton and the rest of Queensland. Well worth a stroll when you get a chance – particularly the up-stream end.

A species to watch

For some time now I have been trying to identify some exotic trees that were planted along Frenchville Road some 25 years ago when the area started to be developed for housing. My interest turned to concern when I found that seedlings were beginning to spread, particularly along the creek line. John McCabe has dug into the extensive database buried in his brain and has identified the tree as *Fraxinus griffithii* or Himalayan ash (Family: Oleaceae). A quick Google search revealed that my concern was not misplaced as it is now listed as an environmental weed and is listed by the Brisbane City Council as Class C- Contain and Remove). It originates in the Indian subcontinent and grows extensively in SE Asia (and now in some Australian cities).

As you might expect of a weedy species it is a small tree up to 10 m (occasionally taller) which flowers prolifically and produces thousands of winged seeds. It is listed as drought tolerant and fast growing (although the ones on Frenchville Rd are still only 4 m after 25 years). While it is quite an attractive tree in itself, we have enough environmental weeds without contributing to their further spread. There are any number of native trees that would make a suitable substitute.

Contributed by Bob Newby

Mt Etna January Update

The Mt Etna and Caves National Parks were not spared in the bushfires in early December, with the fire reaching the very top of Mt Etna. All the revegetation areas that were intended to reconnect the two parks with a wildlife corridor were affected by the fire. Due to the ongoing efforts of the OGRES (Old Guys Revegetation and Environmental Services) volunteer team to keep weeds under control and water plants



through the drought, the fire was a little less intense than might otherwise have been the case. The OGRES and volunteers from FBA have restarted weeding and flagging survivors. Estimates of survival are at this stage tentative (and quite variable) but my personal (and optimistic) guesstimate is that 70% of the planting may survive. Species that have got away quickly include White cedar (*Melia*), Bats wing coral (*Erythrina*), Native bauhinia (*Lysiphyllum*), Cocky apple (*Planchonia*), Sandpaper fig (*Ficus*) and Snotty gobbler (*Cordia*). These had good root reserves and are now up to 50cm high. As of the time of writing (6

weeks post fire) some plants are just showing the first signs of regrowth from rootstock. One surprise is the rather soft herb *Plectranthus*. It will be interesting to do a proper assessment about 3 months after the fire. The original planting included a wide range of species however one of the things to be learned from the experience will be the desirability of being more selective about the species included in an initial planting.

Contributed by Bob Newby (OGRES) Photo credit: Maryanne Smith, Greening Australia, early December '19

How can a humble backyard gardener counter the massive massacre of our wildlife?

Article by Robin Powell. Published in the Sydney Morning Herald on 18 January 2019.

In the 1970s Australians were thinner and poorer, believed Chiko rolls to be delicious and *Countdown* to be essential – and they shared the planet with 60 per cent more animals than we do in 2019. The massive wildlife massacre of the past few decades, detailed in a major study produced by the World Wildlife Fund in late 2018, is largely a function of disappearing habitat as roads slice up wilderness and housing blocks follow. The scientists who tallied up the missing mammals, birds, fish and reptiles didn't get around to insects, but their population decline is evident in everything from lower pollination rates to cleaner windscreens on summer holiday drives.

What might a humble backyard gardener do about the human capacity to consider our wellbeing disconnected from the wellbeing of the ecosystem on which we depend for air, water and everything else? AB Bishop, horticulturist, landscape designer and garden writer, has an answer – the habitat garden – and her book, *Habitat*, is an impassioned, warm and witty how-to for bringing life back into the garden.



Wildlife like the whole life cycle of plants, not just the pretty bits. *CREDIT: MURDOCH BOOKS*

Bishop lives on a 1.2 hectare bush block and believes that protecting wildlife should be a fundamental drive of the gardens we create, wherever we live. Fortunately she doesn't have an evangelist's insistence and instead lures us to agree with tales of watching butterflies from the deck, and birds from the deck chair.

A habitat garden, she writes, is less work than a manicured garden, because life likes the whole life cycle, not just the pretty bits. Untidy fallen twigs and leaves, dead branches, flowering weeds in the "lawn" and



decaying stuff in the shrubbery all feed the soil micro-organisms and thousands of insect species that are at the bottom of the food chain. Bishop explains how gardeners can attract earthworms and insects, frogs and reptiles, birds and other animals by understanding the backyard ecosystem and choosing plants that provide food and habitat for a wide range of life.

Helmeted honeyeaters can be attracted to a garden by judicious

planting. *CREDIT: M. SERONG*

Her case studies illustrate the decisions homeowners can make to share their outdoors with living things more various than mozzies and mynas. Jane and Ian Russell, for instance, turned the necessity of replacing the roof of their suburban Melbourne home into an opportunity to create a roof garden. The grasses and low-growing, tough natives draw insects, butterflies and birds to the roof. Elsewhere she introduces gardeners providing habitat for endangered bandicoots, turning pools into billabongs alive with an orchestra of frogs, and providing nesting boxes for all manner of possums.

Once hooked on the biodiversity of their own backyards, Bishop's hope is that gardeners will develop a new appreciation of Australia's threatened biodiversity hotspots and extend that care into the wild.

What's in flower in CQ

Over the Christmas period, I made a visit to the Tondoon Botanic Gardens in Gladstone and spotted a few plants in flower!



Medicosma cunninghamii
(Bonewood)



Cordyline manners-suttoniae
(Giant palm lily)



Mackinlaya macrosciadea

Photos: Emma Owbridge.



Return Address: Native Plants Capricornia, 401 Frenchville Rd, Frenchville QLD 4701