



Friends of Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens Inc.

NEWSLETTER

Mar 2023 Volume 27 Issue 1

From the President

Lynn Vlismas

I have taken some time off recently to travel to the South Island of New Zealand. No rain and no earthquakes were in evidence as these ended up further north of us in the North Island. It was an interesting trip because the things valued most were the wonders of the natural environment, and not so much man's influence on that environment.

New Zealand is also interesting in being comparable to Australia in so many ways – perhaps the most apparent is in enjoying its outdoor lifestyle, being a former British colony, speaking the same language, and in having an established indigenous population. They also suffer the same issues in trying to maintain their biodiversity against the incursion of exotic plants and introduced fauna.

No-one is thanking Australia for sharing our possum species - much to the detriment of the local predominantly ground dwelling bird species - but NZ's revenge is to make possum fur into expensive knitwear and sell this back to Aussie tourists.

Something we can learn as Australians is that we must value our Australian environment much more than we do currently. The Federal Government's - "Australia, State of the Environment 2021" - recently released report shows how poor the environment is overall, and how it continues to deteriorate. It is a confronting picture for not only the environment but it also has the potential to impact on the wellbeing of Australians.

Some key findings which we can relate to the Sunshine Coast and also our Botanic Garden are:

- more mammal species have become extinct in Australia than any other continent;
- there are now more foreign terrestrial plant species in Australia than native species;
- at least 19 Australian ecosystems have been reported as showing signs of collapse or near collapse.

I don't wish to sound like a prophet of doom in bringing these concerns to the forefront but I believe that our volunteer Botanic Gardens Friends group, in collaboration with Council's Natural Areas Team, is starting to make a positive difference.

Friends of MRBBG Inc.

Our Mission:

'To support the establishment and development of a unique world-class Bushland Botanic Gardens for the Sunshine Coast'.

Our Vision for the Gardens:

'To experience the harmony between people and the living environment'.

Our Vision for the Friends:

'To establish a vibrant and responsive Friends organization known for enthusiasm, participation and initiative'.

What's In This Issue?

| | |
|--|---|
| From the President | 1 |
| Queensland's Fern Fever | 2 |
| Backyards for Biodiversity | 3 |
| Inspired by Nature Exhibition | 4 |
| Lenwebbia, Gondwana Garden & Len Webb AO | 6 |
| What's Happening on Site | 7 |

Our Supporters

Nambour Print & Copy

6 Price St, Nambour
5441 4622

nambourprint@bigpond.com



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Botanic Gardens can make the community aware of the importance of maintaining a balance in our Biosphere. Searching out rare and threatened plant species, propagating and planting them for display and sale and then their eventual planting into local backyards would be a start. Having a more diverse local Plant Collection within the Garden will also encourage associated mammals and pollinators over time.

As the President of the Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens, Linda Beveridge, recently wrote – *“Friends of Botanic Gardens members throughout Australia are key players in this by supporting Botanic Gardens to grow plants, undertake research, and in activities that explain plants and their related ecosystems to a wide range of interested people”*.

I believe we are heading along in the right direction in our efforts to make the community more aware of the value of what we have on our own doorstep, so, I will leave you with this panoramic image of our own Garden.



- It continues to inspire, doesn't it? –

Queensland's Fern Fever

Stacey Lerner, Librarian, Queensland Memory (August 31, 2021)

Pteridomania was the name coined by Charles Kingsley for the British fern fever of the nineteenth century. Unlike orchidelirium, fern fever was a pursuit embraced by all classes, open to anyone “possessing good taste”, as declared by Edward Newman in A history of British Ferns. This fever spread to the colonies, with Australian ferns presenting exciting new opportunities for collection and decoration.



School excursion on Mount Tamborine, 1935

(John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland)

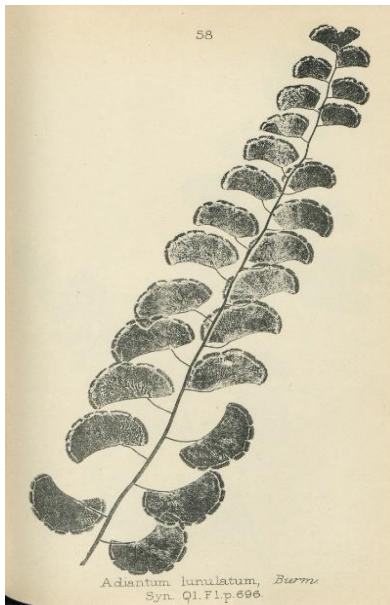
The creation of fern albums was popular among collectors, and the rare Queensland example below includes location information recorded by its creator. Charles Evans was so enamoured with ferns he would collect them as he was rounding up straying cattle while working in North Queensland in the 1880s.



Queensland Nineteenth Century Fern Album, Charles Evans; 1883-1884

(John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland)

Ferns, with their flat and intricate leaves, presented interesting possibilities for mass-produced nature printing. Lithograms of the ferns of Queensland, published in 1892, was intended as a low-cost identification guide for fern enthusiasts. In his “prefatory notice”, Frederick Manson Bailey articulates this compromise between quality and cost: one way to keep costs low was to avoid the use of artists and engravers, and turn to lithography using specimens as nature prints.



**Lithographs of the ferns of Queensland by
Fredk. Manson Bailey, Queensland Department
of Agriculture, 1892**

(John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland)

Queensland has no shortage of beautiful fern species, and the most exciting to discover must have been the epiphytic ferns like staghorns and bird's nest ferns. Instead of requiring pots and greenhouses, epiphytic ferns could be hung as decorative pieces. An aesthetic quite peculiar to Queensland, the sight of staghorns adorning public and private infrastructure persisted well into the late twentieth century.



**Staghorn ferns growing on the stonework of the
Lands and Works Office in Brisbane, 1904**

(John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland)

As with all collecting crazes, the fern fever saw plants stripped from their natural habitats to feed the appetites of collectors. The image below shows a collecting party picnicking after removing wild staghorns near Maryborough.



**Group of people having a picnic in the bush
near Maryborough after gathering staghorns, ca.
1915**

(John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland)

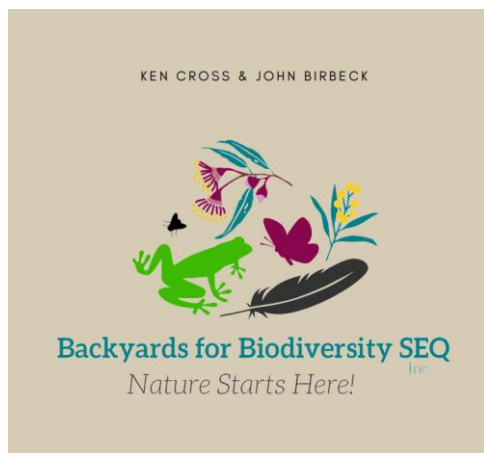
Eventually this appetite for beautiful hanging gardens in public spaces waned, possibly due to the cost of maintenance. While South Brisbane station no longer boasts a fernery, Kuranda scenic railway station is one of the few whose tropical fern gardens persist.



**Kuranda scenic railway station with hanging
ferns**

Review - 'Backyards for Biodiversity'

Malcolm Cox



This isn't a book review, it's more of a 'resource review'.

The essential resource is 'Backyards for Biodiversity SEQ Inc' by Ken Cross and John Birbeck. You can download it here, bit by bit if necessary - [Resources \(backyardsforbiodiversity.org\)](https://backyardsforbiodiversity.org) - which makes it the cheapest, most accessible 'book' of its kind for gardeners who want to be wildlifers - and *vice versa*. Clearly the authors aren't in it for the money, and there are more important things than money.

Along with chapters on '**Backyards for Bees, Butterflies, Bugs and Beetles**' and '**Native Food Plants**', there are others designed to challenge the conventions that defy biodiversity, like **Lose the lawn, Embrace some Mess, and The Kaufman Challenge** - essentially... *'that every person might learn to recognize fifty species of plants and animals native to his or her own region'*. These simple but powerful concepts are the point of difference, relatable and reassuring to those who are willing, and giving permission and encouragement to those who lack confidence or starting points.

But that's only half the story. The real resource is the organisation itself. While many, more conventional community organisations are (post-Covid) struggling to recover their energy and revitalise their Membership base, Backyards for Biodiversity SEQ Inc (BfB) is tapping into that growing cohort of active and informed citizens driven by actions that speak louder than words, particularly when it means taking nature personally. Their Facebook following grows like weeds in wet weather, and celebrates a wide range of ideas, achievements and natural backyard delights.

What does that have to do with Friends of MRBBG? The exploding interest and membership base for starters. Then there's the planned 'Backyard Series' of workshops and activities at MRBBG in 2023, which echoes all the

intent of the 'Natives Naturally - for Your Garden' workshops we ran in pre-Covid times. The BfB representative, Natalie Sanderson, will be the first Guest Speaker for our four General Meeting/Public Presentation series 'Backyards to Biosphere' spread across the year (see Calendar/Events). Top that with the local connections: BfB was launched at Fairhill Native Nursery in 2022, the year that the Sunshine Coast was declared a 'UN Biosphere Reserve', and the booklet was written by two local authors (see the Resource for their bios): *Climate change, massive habitat loss and endangered species, are clear and present symptoms of this risk that only politicians can choose to ignore. Action, indeed, is the best antidote to despair.* [Ken Cross] *We can bring nature back. We can rewild our backyards, public spaces, and cities.* [John Birbeck]

We know that we **can**, but do we really know **why** we should? Do those who know **why** want to know **how**? Clearly, we need to start with those who have the will and the resources to try, or to try harder. Even those with balconies, nesting boxes, vege beds and tiny courtyard gardens can see space - almost any space - as a potential green space, and that in turn as habitat. What stops us?? Only our sense of 'bio-phobia', our sense of inconvenience and our obsession with controlling and protecting our living spaces as financial assets and magazine images.

As we seek to support and grow our local Botanic Gardens as Friends, we need to be both active and informed in all aspects of local flora, fauna and fungi. We are perfectly placed to help our Biosphere become as biodiverse in our suburbs as it is in our bushland.

Start your Kaufman Challenge today! You probably know fifty already ... but how well??

SAVE THESE DATES

Friends' events in the A&E Centre:

April:

- **'Sentience', 17-30 April:** An exhibition of fine weaving by Suzy Furness,



Sentience in the Natural World

This exhibition explores the ways in which a person's sentience - their senses and feelings - are affected by spending time in the natural world. It was thought once, that only humans were capable of experiencing sentience. However now there is scientific evidence to show that many other creatures are sentient. So, my exhibition is also about the possible sentience of our cohabitants in these natural places. I cannot say for certain that a spider feels frustration or grief when a careless human destroys its carefully prepared food trap, or that lorikeets swinging on a wire are expressing joy in the moment. None the less, the observation of these behaviours enables us to understand and explore our own feelings. After you visit my exhibition I hope you take a walk in the Botanic Garden to observe, imagine and feel the magic of being in a 'natural world'.



Learn to weave workshops:
(Looms provided)
\$60.00 tuition; \$10 materials
For more information
(SMS): 0493615716
Facebook:
The Addicted Weaver

1st Workshop:
April 21, 9.30 - 11.30
April 22+23, 10 - 12
2nd Workshop:
April 28, 9.30 - 11.30
April 29+30, 10 - 12
To book a place, email:
friendsofMRBBG@gmail.com



... PLUS...

- **2 learn-to-weave Workshops with Suzy Furness**
- **A Friends' Fundraiser with a difference;**
Members can register early NOW!

May:

- **Backyards to Biosphere 2: 'The State of Our Species' Forum, 04 May, 2 – 3:30**
Learn what the experts know and feel about the biodiversity of our Region, with presentations on Sunshine Coast fungi, flora and fauna, followed by a Q&A session for audience participation.
Free - All Welcome for some stimulating discussion – Afternoon Tea to follow.
- **Photographic display of FUNGI:** Volunteers' images from the Gardens on display in the A&E Centre, a tribute to our willing workers for National Volunteer Week, 15-21 May.

July:

- **'Inspired by Nature', 13-31 July:** Members' artworks on display and for sale, following the success of 'IbN' in 2022. It's time to get to work and build your collections and creations; please email 'ATTN: Inspired by Nature' to friendsofMRBBG@gmail.com to register your interest in exhibiting, planning and helping. We need organisers as well as artists!

Expressions of Interest for the Friends

'Inspired by Nature' Exhibition – July 13-31, 2023

By Deb Ducrou

The Friends extend a warm invitation to all creative, artistic Friends to be part of our second 'Inspired by Nature' Exhibition from Monday 10th to Saturday 29th July, 2023.

Last year's successful exhibition drew a good crowd & many sales.



Last year's 'Inspired by Nature' Exhibition

This year we are hoping to add Weaving & Digital Art to painting, pottery, sculpture, wood & paper. We are very fortunate to have an incredible number of talented and skilled artisans in our Friends group.

So, please let us know if you are interested in adding your particular form of art to our exhibition and start working on something wonderful !!

Exhibitors will be required to participate in the roster to man/woman the exhibition.

Contact either Everard Kloots: ekloots@gmail.com
or Deb Ducrou: potterinpurple@hotmail.com

Start getting creative !!!! NOW !!!

Lenwebbia, Gondwana Garden & Len Webb AO

Malcolm Cox

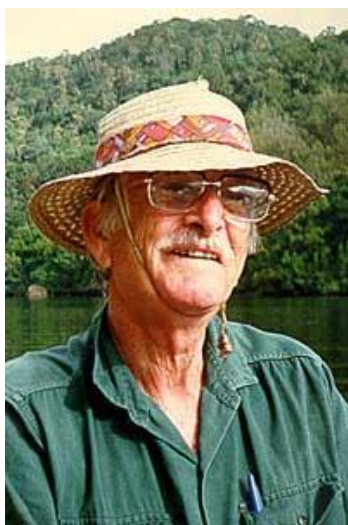
Lenwebbia sp. Blackall Range (P.R.Sharpe 5387) is one of a handful of species in the Myrtaceae family, all from north Qld to north-eastern NSW. The genus varies from other myrtles like *Austromyrtus* and *Gossia* in having just four petals.

L. 'sp Blackall Range' may be better known as one of our region's rarest and most endangered species than by its (aspirational?) common name of Sunshine Coast myrtle.

Along with too many other Myrtaceae species, it's highly susceptible to myrtle rust *Austropuccinia psidii*.

Following local work on resistant strains, it was exciting to hear from Michael Gilles (Sunshine Coast Council) at our last Management Meeting that the MRBBG Plant Collection will be extended by a planting of *Lenwebbia* 'sp Blackall Range' in the near future. This news coincides with Gondwana Garden discussions aimed at transforming the Mossy Log Garden into a special display and collection of species representing the evolution of our flora, from primitive fern allies and mosses to cycads, conifers and significant flowering plants.

Watch this space for future news on both. Meanwhile, who was Len Webb?



Prof. Len Webb
[Image: ANBG]

Prof. Leonard James Webb AO [1920-2008] "... held many important national and international positions including Foundation Councillor of the Australian Conservation Foundation (1965); Vice-President, Queensland Wildlife Preservation Society (1963); Member of the UNESCO National Commission, Australia (1975-76); member of the Australian National Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Committee (1974-80); a contributor to an international study week on tropical forests at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in the Vatican City (1990); and a member of the Commission on Ecology of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)(1979-90)."

[Source: <https://www.anbg.gov.au/biography/webb-leonard-james.html>]

For some more background on his work and achievements, ...

"In November 1965 Webb, accompanied by [Geoff Tracey](#), conducted a vegetation survey in the Wet

Tropics which resulted in Webb putting forward a series of national park proposals in 1966 for the purpose of protecting the full range of the remaining habitats of the Wet Tropics. ... Webb's report was the first report of its kind and contained the first reference in scientific literature to the international significance of the lowland rainforests of the Wet Tropics. ...

In the early '80s after decades of ongoing research, Webb and Tracey had accumulated a large corpus of scientific evidence which confirmed that Australian tropical rainforests had evolved from [Gondwana](#) over 100 million years ago and were not, as previously believed, relatively recent arrivals from South East Asia. ... This new understanding of the origins of Australian rainforests ... significantly contributed to the scientific basis for the subsequent successful World Heritage nomination of the [Wet Tropics of Queensland](#) in 1988."

[Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard_Webb_\(academic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard_Webb_(academic))]

When we label our plants as being 'rare', 'critically endangered' etc, let's also honour the names behind them, in this case a name synonymous with not only species but also the study and preservation of whole ecosystems.

What's Happening on Site

Ray Dale – MRBBG Site Volunteer Co-Ordinator

Last summer we faced occasional Covid outbreaks and some strong winds. It seems the only change is that we now live with Covid. Over the past months we have experienced some dry windy conditions with occasional rain. Not abnormal but different to the previous year. Late December the gardens held the council's annual Christmas Lights show which saw over 16000 people through the gates. A lot of happy faces seeing the gardens at an unusual timeslot.



James and Ross slowly working up a sweat

The volunteers are slowly drifting back from the Christmas hiatus and now our numbers are back to pre Covid days.

Council staff have been kept busy aerating and fertilizing the open lawns in preparation for cooler times and our gardeners have been equally busy weeding, watering and fertilizing the beds.

The maintenance work within the gardens has been stepped up with oiling of the furniture and pressure cleaning the paths.



Lynelle the happy pressure cleaner

Placing teams around designated gardens such as the Arts & Ecology, Fern Glade, Sculpture Garden and Whipbird are showing results with those areas always looking pristine. Well done by those teams.



Slow work on the creek walk

Further afield the work continues with repatriation work on both the Creek Walk and Upland Tracks.

The Creek Walk has had pavers laid in some low laying areas in order to give it all weather access and some new steps put in to replace rotten timber. The Friends also funded a further 72 metres of concrete path leading into the Creek Walk at a cost of \$10000.00



Allan, Ray and Jeff replacing rotten steps

The Upland Track which suffered badly from last year's flooding required repairs in several places. The council are committed to some major work requiring contractors and the Friends have committed funds to repair work at the Creek Walk junction so as access to the Western Tall Gums can remain open. Track work is one of our more arduous tasks as access is difficult and requires manual handling of product some of which is cumbersome.

The Friends have recently committed funding of \$1200.00 to install 2 new native bee hives within the garden precinct. The housing for the hives will be created from seasoned timber and fixed permanently into concrete. Next time you are in the gardens see if you can find them.

Now onto autumn we go, fertilizing and mulching getting gardens ready for winter. Hopefully some rain to help us along the way.

An invitation

**to be part of the Maroochy Bushland
Botanic Garden**

Management Committee

The Friends are wanting to expand to add a broader range of skills and experience to the management committee. We would love to hear from people who have interest and/or experience in promoting the Friends and/or the Garden, especially using social media; planning and running events; developing ideas for how to attract visitors to the Garden; and assist with other fund-raising activities.

We all want to see the Bushland Botanic Garden continue to prosper and be a relevant part of the Sunshine Coast community and this will be better achieved through a more diverse and varied management committee.

If you would like to be part of preserving something special for future generations, please make contact with one of us.

**If you are interested in finding out how you
can contribute, please contact:**

Lynn Vlismas President

Bob Ducrou Secretary

Ray Dale Volunteer Coordinator

Friends' Events

Open Management Meetings

2nd Thu, 1pm @ Friends Shed

Mar 09

Apr 13

May 11

Bushcare

2nd Sat, 7am (subject to weather)

Mar 11

Apr 15

May 13

Fauna Watch Survey

2nd Wed, 8am

Mar 08

Apr 12

May 10

Welcome to our new Friends: Peta Boyce, Annamaria Budai-Markolt, Andrew Hines, Joy Thorne

Information

Mail

Friends of MRBBG Inc.

PO Box 445, BUDERIM, Qld 4556

Web

www.friendsofmaroochybotanicgardens.org.au/

Facebook

Friends Maroochy BG

(fb.com/groups/600452596770097/)

Email

friendsofMRBBG@gmail.com

Secretary

Bob Ducrou

07 5456 2743

Membership:

A form is available on our Website, or use this link to download - [Membership Application Form](#)

A member of

