



Friends of Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens Inc. NEWSLETTER

Apr 2026 Volume 30 Issue 1

Celebrating 30 Years of Friendship and Action.

Yes “the Friends” turn 30 in May!

While the future may present many challenges, the Sunshine Coast has a special place where citizens and travellers alike can share experiences of exploring, discovering, learning, creating, and simply ‘being’, connected to natural wonders of our Region through its bushland flora, fauna and fungi.

On the global calendar 2026 is the Year of Volunteering for Sustainability, so we have earned the right to pause and think not only ‘*what have we done for the Gardens?*’ but also ‘*what have the Gardens done to sustain us?*’ and ‘*how can these Gardens help sustain people, plants and place for decades and generations to come?*’.

Well, just for starters, and acknowledging that this isn’t all...

- we formed in **1996** and soon advocated for the acquisition of the site and worked with Council to ensure its status as a botanic garden;
- we funded the 1998 Master Plan, now being reviewed to facilitate growth and development for another 30 years, more or less;
- we helped Council, through Maureen Sheargold’s leadership, community support and a team of tireless volunteers, make a garden worthy of an official opening in **2001**;
- we organised and funded the Sculpture Symposium in 2005, which led to the development and opening of the Sculpture Garden in **2006**;
- we collaborated with Council on the Whipbird Walk/Village, the development of the network of walking tracks and a range of ongoing activities including koala research

And now, after some five years since the Richmond Birdwing Butterfly Arbour was conceived, we will mark **2026** as a celebration of its completion along with its companion Butterfly Garden.

See inside this issue for more details and events - and save the dates!
Update your 2026 calendar: **24 May** (30th birthday celebration + info session); **11 June**, AGM; **10-12 July**, Qld Garden Show; **early Sept**, Art Exhib’n; **07- & 10 November**, celebrate completion of the Butterfly Garden.

HAVE TIME TO HELP ?? Email us at friendsofMRBBG@gmail.com

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’.

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Views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Friends and /or its executive.

From the President

Malcolm Cox

Where do we fit in 'IVY 2026'?

This 'International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development' [IVY 2026] will incorporate Botanic Gardens Week 18-24 May which will focus this time on 'the health and wellbeing value of botanic gardens'.



<https://www.bgan.org.au/news-events/botanic-gardens-week/>

As we start 2026 feeling (*insert yours here*), could it also become "The Year of Introspection" for us?

Friends groups, like our own, feel the connections between community organisation and volunteer resource very deeply, and the health and wellbeing of our Members affects our ongoing ability to remain effective as well as active. Our own circumstances reflect those of so many other groups that - in addition to reports and new strategies we have outlined in previous issues - the State Government is tackling the 'volunteer crisis' with 'a 10-year volunteering plan aimed at boosting participation ...', as reported by Marina Gomide (*Glasshouse Country & Maleny News*; 13 January 2026).

Her report cited several local cases, including one group that "was struggling to attract younger members, with its working committee largely aged between 60 and 89". It is evident that long-term memberships do not suit younger citizens in particular. However, we need to be very critical about responding that 'we need grow our membership' if our goal is to replicate and sustain our successes by expecting younger generations to follow our trends. We can't change them (why would we?); we can only change ourselves - and the way we engage with them.

With all levels of Government wanting to improve participation in volunteering, where do we 'fit'? Friends of MRBBG Inc. has worn various hats over three decades, including Community group, Friends group, Garden Club and Volunteer group. Many members, who volunteer, joined the Friends when they did more of the organising

that is now done by Council. As the nature of volunteering evolves, we need to evolve with it and open doors to new ways of new ways of 'being Friends'.

VALE Gavin Bingham



Gavin in the Sculpture Garden, where he demonstrated the difference a caring, friendly Volunteer can make. His life-long love of gardening and commitment to the presentation of the sculptures will be there for all to appreciate and remember him by for many years.

Personal reflections -

Tom Corrigan

Gavin Bingham joined the Friends Volunteers at the Gardens around 2017. With a long history of working his various skills around the UK including a stint at the Gardens in Edinburgh, Gavin always embraced his origins as a Scotsman.

His first career was working for British Gas in England & Scotland. The icy weather of Scotland wasn't what endeared him to his origins but he could never disown his distinctive accent.

Following his time in the UK, Gavin embraced the option through British Gas of establishing gas lines across New Zealand. He made his home in Wellington with his family and then after a further ten years he crossed 'The Ditch' and embraced Australia as his new home. He then, with his wife Margaret and son Dylan, established himself as the Manager of four large Service Stations in Northern Brisbane.

He then moved to the Sunshine Coast to enjoy its lovely climate and commence his retirement. Around 2017 he joined the Friends of the Maroochy Bushland Botanic Gardens to share his skills and experience and to contribute to the place we all love.

A Celebration of Life

An event to celebrate Gavin's amazing life was held at the Gardens in March. It also served as a celebration of Volunteering itself, with his son Dylan thanking the Gardens and the Friends for giving him purpose and a second 'family'. Despite his sudden passing, his health and wellbeing was sustained by the opportunities the Gardens provided to make friends, express deep love of Life and to share this through his many stories.



Gavin's son Dylan helps plant a Phebalium woombye in the Sculpture Garden as co-workers Brian and Terry watch with other Friends, ready to care for it with care and affection

Which is Which? Try this QUIZ.

Malcolm Cox

Here are two local plants that look alike. Could you recognise them correctly in their natural habitat? They both are easy-to-grow, have tapering leaves, small, berry-like fruit that various birds eat, and each one has a common name borrowed from tasty fruit.

Exhibit A:



A. has tiny black berries and ornamental foliage with slender leaves that are very like peach, and ...

- the leaves are **highly toxic to mammals**,

- pioneer farmers routinely removed them from local properties to protect stock,
 - they may be found in our natural bushland.
- Wildlife carers are particularly wary of it, to avoid feeding it to possums.

Exhibit B:



B. has soft, white fruit like mulberries and leaves with silvery undersides. It is not a popular garden specimen but should be grown more as a small tree, because ...

- it can be shaped to give good shade,
- it attracts wildlife (birds and pollinators),
- the fruit is a nice treat straight from the tree.

One is Native Mulberry (*Pipturis argenteus*), and one is Poison Peach (*Trema tomentosa*).

So ... which is which?

Answers on page 5

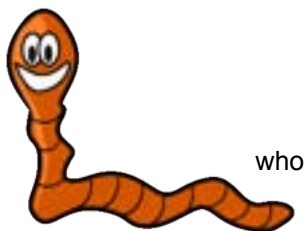
Text and Images: Malcolm Cox

The Worm Lady

Lyn Jackson

Hi all.

First let me thank all those contribute scraps, etc, to the worm farm that is located in the garbage bins under the A & E toilet block. If you do



who

not currently supply scraps there is still plenty of room for you to donate.

Sometimes it is hard to know what to donate so we just don't bother. As a long time composter I find it is easy to set up a routine and then it is not a chore.

Basically you just need to remember that **citrus, meat and bread are not suitable for worms** to eat and need to be kept to a bare minimum if added.

Worms love lots of paper products (not glossy paper) so if you have pizza boxes, shredded paper, egg cartons it would be appreciated.

Other tips are to cut your scraps into smaller pieces, e.g. don't put in large clumps of vegetables, tear apart corn husks, and cut vegetables stems as worms have little mouths.

I have attached a video that you might like to watch to give you some ideas. It includes lots of videos of other caterpillars (not sure why) so just ignore them and listen to the ideas suggested.

https://youtu.be/HO4DJr0Y_1U

Thanks so much for helping in this sustainable practice.

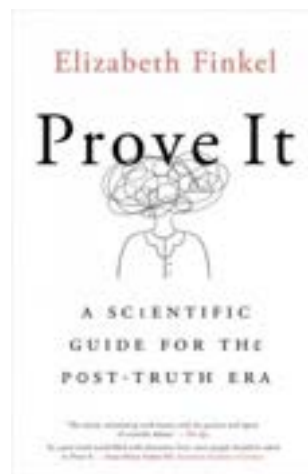
Cheers

Lyn J

Book Review

Paul Horne

"Prove It A Scientific Guide for the Post - Truth Era"; Elizabeth Finkel; Publisher: La Trobe University Press; 2025



This is an excellent book for the scientifically minded, who would like to fully understand how the scientific method really works. Elizabeth Finkel holds a PhD in biochemistry and spent ten years as a research scientist before becoming an award-winning journalist and author.

Humans have developed the scientific method over centuries. Its departure from what came before was that theories should be fuelled by data, not opinion. Today, the institutions that underpin democracy – the law, academia, government, journalism – all rely on this central idea: seeking facts and interrogating them through robust discussion and real-world testing. Yet in the post-truth era, public conversations can feel far from scientific.

In *Prove It*, Elizabeth Finkel describes how the scientific method plays out in a series of controversies, from proving the existence of Einstein's gravitational waves to identifying the origins of Covid-19, from understanding human origins to defining consciousness. Through these tales of dispute and discovery, she breaks down the key elements of scientific thinking.

Full of politics, prejudice, obsession, heroism and eccentricity, *Prove It* captures the drama and excitement of scientific discovery and debate and argues compellingly that its lessons are more crucial now than ever.

If you are interested in borrowing this book ask in the book room, I have a copy.

Which is which?

Answers ...

Exhibit A is Poison Peach

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trema_tomentosum
(Previously known as *T. aspera* ; also known as *T. tomentosa* .)

Exhibit B is Native Mulberry

<https://botanic-garden.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/learn/trees/native-mulberry-pipturis-argenteus>

(The epithet 'argenteus' refers to the silvery undersides of the leaves. This is an easy way to tell the difference at any time of the year.)

Fern Flowers and Seeds

Wendy Johnson

Searching for some interesting 'facts' about ferns, I came across these two pieces:

In **Slavic folklore**, ferns are believed to bloom once a year, during the Ivan Kupala night. Although alleged to be exceedingly difficult to find, anyone who sees a "fern flower" is thought to be guaranteed to be happy and rich for the rest of their life. [The Ivan Kupala night in folk tradition, was revered as the day of the summer solstice and was originally celebrated on the shortest night of the year.]

Similarly, **Finnish tradition** holds that one who finds the "seed" of a fern in bloom on a Midsummer night will, by possession of it, be guided and be able to travel invisibly to the locations where eternally blazing Will o' the Wisps, called aarnivalkea, mark the spot of hidden treasure. These spots are protected by a spell that prevents anyone but the fern-seed holder from ever knowing their locations.

Sharing Your Garden with Birds

Paul Horne

Most home gardens are ornamental with large open grass areas like around the A&E. This type of garden favours the larger, noisy species like magpies, butcher birds and noisy miners. Smaller birds, like ferry wrens and eastern yellow robins, struggle to find a place in these type of gardens.



Eastern yellow robin

There are a few steps that can be taken so that your garden can make life easier for a wider variety of bird species.

1. Garden layers, not lawns

Birds use gardens in three dimensions, some forage on the ground while others feed in shrubs and trees. The more variety of structure you provide, the more birds you will see.

Instead of broad expanses of lawn, plant a scattering of trees and shrubs. Mix groundcovers of local native grasses with low or mid-story local shrubs. This

creates a dense cover in which small birds can hide from predators and the more aggressive birds.

Small trees can provide structure and food of seeds, nectar or insects. Plant in clumps rather than rows.



Garden using small trees, shrubs and groundcover

2. Plant for insects, not just nectar
Grevilleas and bottlebrushes attract the bigger and bossier birds. Plant a broader mix of plant species that support insects. Even honeyeaters feed their young chicks insects. The paperbarks (*Melaleuca spp.*) and small tea-trees (*Leptospermum spp.*) teem with insects.
3. Safe zones and hideaways
Small birds like to stay near cover where they can quickly retreat from the more dominant species. A small clump of shrubs (*Hakea spp.*) or tangled climbing vines (*Hardenbergia spp.*) can make a difference.
4. Offer water safely
A birdbath placed near shrubs so birds can observe and retreat quickly, will attract the smaller birds. If the bath is deeper then add rocks or pebbles for easier footing. Birdbaths offer a place to drink and to cool off on hot summer days.
5. Relax the tidy-up
Sharing your garden with birds means less work for you to do. Birds find the mess, such as fallen leaves and branches, interesting to pick through.

Lightly trim the branch tips of shrubs to make them bushier and denser. This is better for small birds seeking shelter or nesting sites. Native birds prefer native vegetation

Reference: Our Gardens; The Garden Clubs of Australia, Issue 108
Autumn 2026; Ben Humphries
ABC Gardening Australia

Maroochy **Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens.**

Our Garden in verse by Stephen Sayers

Drive through the gate and look around,
a place of plenty and more to be found.

At the bridge you can see such wonderful things,
the trees, the ferns and birds on the wing.

On the right hand side of the creek walk,
the Walking Stick Orchid stops you to talk.

Drive around the corner the tall gums grow,
Turpentine, Rose Gum and Tallow Wood
are a stunning show.

When the Blue Berry Ash is in bloom,
it's like fairy's petticoats dancing to a tune.

The big Swamp Banksia takes control,
at night the Banksia men are on patrol.

A walk through the Mossy Green garden is a must,
look at the Cycad it's covered in dust.

Down the path you will find in Fern Glade,
fifty different types of ferns that are hidden in the shade.

Small Maiden Hair to the Majestic King Ferns,
the little creek will keep you cool as you wander and turn.

Four different palms we have in the garden;
Lawyer Cane, Walking Stick, Piccabeen and Cabbage.

There is so much to see in the gardens - a real treat,
so many volunteers to keep it all neat.

Butterfly Garden nears completion

Malcolm Cox

The Richmond Birdwing Butterfly Arbours have patiently waited for the planting to be finished around them and in the new Butterfly Garden, and it's almost done!

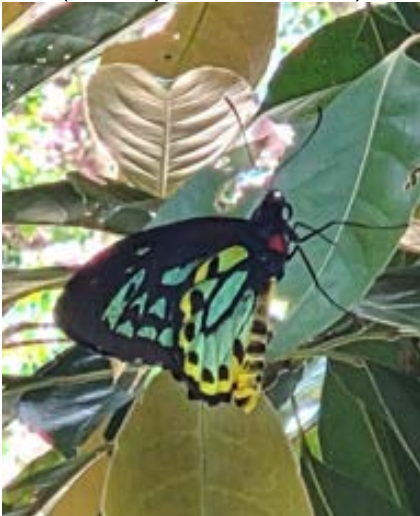
Node 3 (Cocoon) nestles secretly against the bushland backdrop while host plants flourish around it for many butterflies and other local fauna:



Meanwhile, the magnificent species that started it all, the Richmond Birdwing Butterfly *Ornithoptera richmondia* makes an appearance on a *Pararistolochia praevenosa*, vine nearby as a very hungry caterpillar.



Below Adult male Richmond Birdwing Butterfly (*Ornithoptera richmondia*)



Sculpture Garden Entry Upgrade

The Friends of MRBBG will fund a new entry area through a new archway to the **Casuarina Torso** (MJ Anderson, 2005) from around the **Goanna** sculpture (Silvio Apponyi, 2005). This was endorsed by MJ herself during her last visit, and will provide new **Casuarina** backdrop and surrounds as well as a new approach - and will be done before June, all going well.

Looking forward: The hedge, cut to ground level, has begun to regrow. There will be new seats in new places, new sandstone pavers around both sculptures, and a permanent aggregate pathway through the site with concrete under all pavers.



Looking back: The old pavers are showing cracks and lifting, the decomposed granite around **Goanna** has been an annoying erosion problem, and the hedge lost its lower growth and needed renewal.



2026 Friends' Meetings & Events

Open Management Meetings

2nd Thursday of given months, 2pm in A&E Centre

09 Apr Discussion new Master Plan

Have your say for future developments at the Gardens

14 May

11 June Annual General Meeting

10 -12 July Queensland Garden Show

Help with display Nambour Showgrounds

13 Aug

MRBBG Bushcare

2nd Saturday of each month, 7am (subject to weather);

Go to Council website and click on "Join a Bushcare Group" to sign up

Fauna Watch Survey

(Wildlife Queensland, Sunshine Coast Branch)

2nd Wednesdays of each month, 8am

Meet at the Tallowood Shelter

Welcome New Friends

Suky Oliver, Terri Anne Duchworth

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Web

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Friends Maroochy BG

(fb.com/groups/600452596770097/)

Email

friendsofMRBBG@gmail.com

Secretary

Ray Dale

Membership:

Information, including a Membership Application Form, can be found at www.friendsofmaroochybotanicgardens.org.au/join

A member of



WELCOME to the MRBBG team, Antony

Antony Born has worked for Sunshine Coast Council for some time, including regular shifts at MRBBG. He has enthusiasm, readiness to learn, practical initiative and love of our natural bushland flora and fauna. We were delighted to learn that he is now permanently based at the Gardens as Rob's 'offsider'.

Help Fund the Friends

Container for Change

Members using the Containers for Change to contribute to the Friends, can simply take your containers into any recycling station and use the account number **C10079930** Friends of MRBBG.