



Friends of Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens Inc.

NEWSLETTER

Aug 2026 Volume 30 Issue 2

From The President

Lynn Vlismas

What can we expect from the year ahead?

Malcolm Cox has now retired as President of the Friends to spend some well-earned family time in Melbourne after a couple of years of intense Friends activity culminating with the Friends 30 year celebration in May this year.

Planning is progressing well with the exhibition “**Here, Inspired by Nature**” to celebrate the 20 year anniversary of the completion of the Sculpture Garden. This will run from **Saturday September 12 to Sunday September 27** and you can read more about this event further into the newsletter. The refurbished entry to the Sculpture Garden should be complete, weather permitting, within the next month in readiness for the anniversary.

Guymer Bailey, the architects who designed the Arts and Ecology building, have been successful in winning the landscape consultancy to design the new Wallum Garden on the site of the current Coastal Communities/Contemplation Garden in the Eastern garden area. Sketch designs will be available in September for the Friends to be informed of the concept and make comment.

October brings us to the **Opening of the Tanawha Tall Gums Track**, the final link in the completion of a complete perimeter track which runs through the eastern reserve, the uphill areas of the Botanic Garden and into the Western Tall Gums Track in the Conservation area on the western side of the Gardens.

New consultants have now been chosen by Council’s Botanic Garden Advisory Group for the design of the **New Botanic Garden Masterplan** and Council’s Michael Gilles has let the Friends know that they are about to be officially engaged by Council which will enable the consultants to then start the new planning work. There is an expectation that a new Plan should be ready for Council review in the first quarter of 2027.

On **Saturday 7th November** there will be workshops and activities for both children and adults based around the Butterfly Garden. Children can immerse themselves in learning more about creating the life of a butterfly with other groups acting out short plays with colourful butterfly puppets.

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’.

In This Issue

From the President	1
Inspired by Nature	2
The Phaius orchids	2
A Fern Spectacular	3
Nesting Boxes	4
MRBBG Master Plan	5
Celebrating 30 Years	5
Friends Display Qld Garden Show	7
Bushland Beauty	7

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This Newsletter has been produced with the assistance of the Sunshine Coast Council Grants Program.

FMRBBG newsletter is published three times a year in April August and December. We welcome your articles and photographs.

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

Adults will be encouraged to learn about design techniques and plant types to attract local butterflies to visit their gardens, and they can then purchase their plants from two community nurseries before finishing their workshops. Further details will be available to reserve places for all workshops on Eventbrite in early October.

After many years of planning, construction, planting, and growing on, the beautifully sited **Butterfly Garden is ready for an Official Opening** by the Minister for the Environment and Tourism's representative Marty Hunt MP and Sunshine Coast Council Mayor Rosanna Natoli. Visit Sunshine Coast CEO, Matt Stoeckel will also be speaking about promoting the Botanic Gardens more widely to tourists and visitors to the Coast.

Friday 13th November is the date so come along first thing in the morning and join in the celebration - there will be some heartfelt speeches, guided walks through the garden, a ribbon to be cut and a large amount of butterfly cake to consume. Friends are also invited to stay on after the Opening cleanup for an early lunchtime BBQ at the Kurrajong Shelter. Further details will be available and sent out to all members in October.

The new year then promises even more Friends involvement with input into Masterplan planning and implementation of the newly designed Wallum Garden.

Watch this space as more is revealed.....

Here, inspired by nature - explores the relationship between people, nature and art.

Deb Ducrou

The Friends 2026 Art Exhibition will feature 12 inspiring artists representing a wide range of experience and art media.

Each artist has been assigned a nature quote to guide their creative process. The quote becomes the title of their artwork.

This exhibition will run from **Saturday 12 – Sunday 27 September** at the Arts & Ecology Centre, MRBBG daily from **9:30am – 2:30pm**.

Friends are invited to attend the Official Opening on Saturday the 12 September 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm (smart casual). Also, help from some Friends will be needed.

Friends wishing to assist in setting-up, being on roster during the exhibition, bumping out and catering, please

contact Deb via email : potterinpurple@hotmail.com or mobile : 0408 332437.

The *Phaius* orchids, why are they starting to flower now?

Deb Ducrou

The beautiful *Phaius tankervilleae* (Great Swamp Orchid) which grows throughout the garden is starting to send up its flower spike earlier every year. This year it began in the first week of June, last year it was seen in the first week of July and fully open by August.

The *Phaius australis* (Lesser Swamp Orchid) starts its flower spike a little later – middle to end of June this year.

These endangered large terrestrial orchids have an interesting history:

The *Phaius tankervilleae* was named after Lady Emma Bennet, Countess of Tankerville. She was a British heiress, art patron and botanist (1752 – 1836). The orchid was one of the first tropical orchids to be grown in England over 250 years ago. Compared with the *P. australis* the flowers are whiter in the throat, there are more flowers per spike, and they hang downwards from the stem.

The *Phaius australis* originated in Australia, from North Queensland to north eastern NSW (usually in wet areas). It has a deeper maroon coloured flower which presents at a 90° angle to the stem and there are fewer flowers per spike.



The *Phaius* orchid

When I joined the Friends in 2008 the flower spikes would appear late September and be in full flower by mid-October.

What has happened to make these beauties flower early??

Has climate change caught up with them too??

A Fern Spectacular in the Centre of Buderim

Dan Johnston

I regularly ride past this Jacaranda tree on my push bike and I think the display of ferns on it is hard to beat.



This photo is looking towards the roundabout from in front of the old post office.

This tree is on a roundabout at the centre of Buderim (Main St, Ballinger Road, and Lindsay Road) adjacent to the old post office which now serves as an information centre. The trunks are almost completely covered in the felt fern, *Pyrrosia confluens*, and there are several staghorn ferns, *Platycerium superbum*, and large clumps of elkhorn ferns, *Platycerium bifurcatum*, in the canopy.

The second photo below is looking further to the left, above the path down Lindsay Road with a clump of elkhorn ferns prominent on the left, and the felt fern covering the branch to the right of the elks and also visible on another branch in the background.



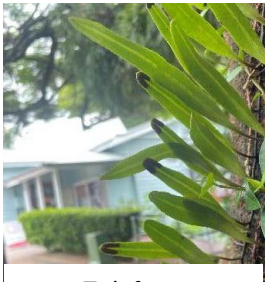
If we move to the right of the trunk (photo below) and again look north, in the direction of Lindsay Road, we see 2 quite large stags, as shown in the third photo. Several stags are probably better seen by walking down the path towards Lindsay Road and looking back. It seems the stags prefer the NE aspect, while the elks are on the southern side.



I hope it is of interest to compare the spore arrangements on these 3 fern species. Spore is the principal reproduction method for ferns, loosely analogous to the seeds of flowering plants, although the reproduction method is quite different. Individual spores are very tiny – generally less than a tenth of a millimetre long, so even relatively small patches of them, as on the felt fern, contain many spores.

The spores are most often on the underside of a frond, although this varies considerably between species, and the spore location and pattern is often critical in identifying the species. In some species, such as the felt fern, the fertile fronds – those carrying the spore – are similar to the sterile fronds which don't have spore. In other ferns, including stags and elks, the fertile and sterile fronds are quite different. Such ferns are termed

dimorphic. The felt fern, *Pyrrosia confluens*, has the spores forming a dark horseshoe shape on the end of the underside of the frond as shown below. Mature elks, *Platycerium bifurcatum*, normally form clumps with many specimens together, and the fertile leaves protrude from the growing point in the middle of the fern. The brown spore patches occur near the end of the fertile fronds. In stags, *Platycerium superbum*, the fertile fronds again protrude from the growing point, but in this case the brown spore is near the broad base of the fertile frond.



Felt fern,
Pyrrosia
confluens



Elkhorn fern,
Platycerium
bifurcatum



Staghorn fern,
Platycerium
superbum

Nesting Boxes

Deb Ducrou

For our creatures – great and small.

The Friends have purchased 40 re-cycled plastic nesting boxes (I know you are thinking – plastic!!), but they are re-cycled thermally stable and drained homes for our critters.



Wooden and Recycled plastic nesting boxes

The boxes come in various sizes to house 8 different species; includes micro-bats, sugar gliders, possums and yellow tailed black cockatoos. These creatures come to the gardens to forage, munch and mate, but cannot live here – we do not have trees old enough to have nesting holes (maybe in 50 years' time we will). So, the Friends have taken a big step in securing some temporary homes for them.

The plastic nesting boxes are much lighter than timber boxes, so will minimise any damage done to the host tree. They also have timber panels on the inside and are designed to suit the requirements of each species.



Nesting Boxes waiting for installation

About 15 boxes have now been installed close to walking tracks to facilitate monitoring over the coming years. The Friends are proposing to install cameras in some of the boxes. The cameras are solar-powered to provide a Bluetooth connection to mobile phones, enabling the public to see who's in residence.

A small team of Friends is needed to look after these nesting boxes.

If you are interested in getting involved, please email Deb at potterinpurple@hotmail.com or mobile: 0408 332437.

Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Garden **Master Plan Renewal**

A Living Landscape for People, Plants and Place

Michael Gilles

The Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Garden (MRBBG) is a living landscape where nature, science, culture and creativity come together. Located on Kabi Kabi Country, and as one of Australia's few dedicated bushland botanic gardens, it is a place for conservation, discovery, learning and recreation, connecting people with the unique plants, ecosystems and stories of the Sunshine Coast. Through its living collections, environmental education, research, artistic expression and interpretation, the Garden encourages visitors to explore, understand and care for the natural world.

For more than 25 years, the Garden's Master Plan has guided the establishment and development of MRBBG, helping shape it into a valued community asset, regional destination, living collection and centre for conservation and learning. As community expectations, environmental challenges and opportunities continue to evolve, Council is now commencing the renewal of the Master Plan to help guide the Garden's future over the next 20 years. The renewed Master Plan will establish a long-term vision and strategic framework to guide investment, conservation, education, research, recreation and visitor experiences while ensuring the Garden remains true to its purpose of showcasing, conserving and celebrating the native plants and ecological communities of the Sunshine Coast region. It will also explore how MRBBG can continue to inspire deeper connections with nature, support learning and wellbeing, celebrate Kabi Kabi Country, and strengthen its role as a regional destination for conservation, education and recreation.

The Friends of Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Garden have played an important role in the establishment, growth and ongoing development of the Garden. Their deep connection to the site, collective knowledge, advocacy and understanding of the Garden's history and future potential provide valuable insights that will help inform the Master Plan renewal process.

The Master Plan renewal also presents an opportunity to reflect on the future role of the Friends. As the Garden, community and botanic garden sector continue to evolve, it also provides an opportunity to reimagine how the Friends can continue to play a meaningful and enduring role in supporting the Garden's long-term vision and success.

Looking ahead, the Master Plan will examine opportunities to improve visitor experiences, accessibility, wayfinding, education and interpretation, while exploring future demonstration gardens, expanded living collections, and improvements to facilities and infrastructure. It will also consider the long-term stewardship of the Garden's collections, including resilience to climate change, emerging biosecurity risks, sustainable water management and the conservation of Sunshine Coast flora.

Ultimately, the Master Plan will provide a roadmap for the conservation, development and sustainable management of MRBBG to 2047, helping ensure the Garden continues to inspire, educate and connect people with nature for generations to come.

Celebrating our first 30 years

Malcolm Cox

In May, the Friends of Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens (MRBBG) celebrated 30 years since formation, sharing a sumptuous afternoon tea with Mayor Rosanna Natoli and early Members and supporters. The event coincided with Botanic Gardens Week, with a theme of 'Where Your Health Grows', as well as National Volunteer Week.

Back in 1996, the initial group of Friends urged the then Maroochy Council to purchase the initial 82 hectares of land at Palm Creek Road at Tanawha. Legend has it that the hummingbird cake baked by Maureen Sheargold (Founding President) was shared with members of the Council at the proposed site back in 1996, and that helped to clinch the deal. It was fitting that Maureen baked another hummingbird cake to share with guests 30 years later at this celebration!



Maureen Sheargold (Founding President), Rosanna Natoli (Mayor, SCC) and Malcolm Cox (President of the Friends) cutting the celebratory hummingbird cake. (Image: Greg Miller)

Aunty Bev Hand provided a warm Welcome to Country and congratulated Members on their tenacity, guidance and three decades of achievements.

Mayor Natoli reflected on the 30-year journey of the Gardens from first being “imagined and then reimagined”. She recalled her own experiences from family picnics to reporting as a journalist on events such as the creation of sculptures and Christmas light shows. “Perhaps the most special times are the times when you come here alone, and you just get to sit, or wander, and really experience the majesty of these Gardens,” she told the gathering that included many supporters who helped establish the site, as well as past and present Members of the Friends group.

As the landscape architect responsible for the 1998 Master Plan for the site, Mr Lawrie Smith AM also reflected on the role of the Friends in the development of the Gardens, noting the Friends have been there “every step of the way”. Lawrie also provided a vision for the future development opportunities for the MRBBG for the next 30 years and encouraged the Sunshine Coast community to embrace these opportunities. His thoughts were echoed by Mr Ralph Bailey, who was the architect of the Arts and Ecology Centre at the MRBBG.

Maureen Sheargold OAM, the Founding President of the Friends, was described by the Master of Ceremonies as “indefatigable” in her vision and contribution to the Gardens over 30 years. In her speech Maureen modestly asked to “Let the gardens speak for themselves

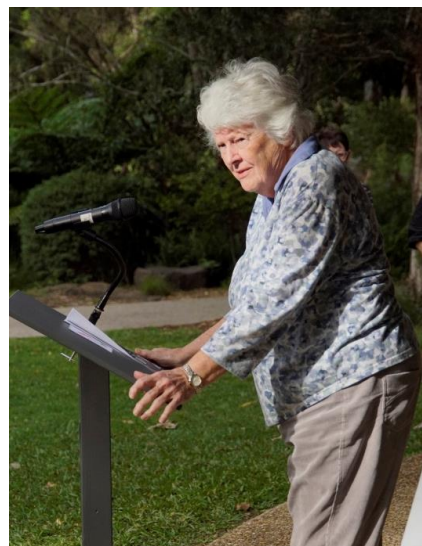


Ralph Bailey and Lawrie Smith AM have extensive experience in landscape architecture and are keen supporters of the Gardens.

(Image: Greg Miller)



Russell, Glenn and Ian explore the excellent display of history and memorabilia compiled by Lyn Andrews.



Elizabeth Shirley of Buderim, a Founding Member of the Friends, recalled the efforts involved in the selection of the Tanawha site for the Gardens some thirty years ago.

(Image: Greg Miller)

Many of the guests at the celebration explored the new Butterfly Garden, the newest joint project between the Friends and the Sunshine Coast Council that has been five years in the making.



Past and Present: Some of the Founding Members of the Friends shared their stories with those who continue to grow their legacy into the future.

(Image: Greg Miller)

Friends Display at Old Garden Show

Lynn Vlismas

The start of the Queensland Garden Show did not look very hopeful. The weather was drizzly, and the crowds were thin, but that did not deter the early bird plant collectors who already knew what they were looking for as they still arrived early.

The early morning drizzle did end up working in our favour sending recently arrived visitors looking for cover from the rain straight into the Garden Clubs Pavilion and on to our Friends Stand.



There was a lot to like and to see at the Friends of MRBBG Stand

Not only were enthusiastic Friends showing visitors what we did at the Gardens but also letting them know how to join the Friends group. Large posters promoted the two major events we had planned for later in Spring - an exhibition entitled - 'Here, Inspired by Nature' which will display artwork from 12 local artists, each inspired by a unique quote about connections to the Botanic Gardens, and Plan and Plant workshops inspired by the launch of

the maturing Butterfly Garden - for both children and adults.

Beautify presented images of local butterflies and the native plants that attracted them, drew many people in for a closer look and a chat about the butterflies they had seen in their Gardens. There were brochures showing other wildlife, wildflower and native plants groups associated with some of the Friends' activities at the Gardens.

Many people just wanted to admire the plants that the Friends had propagated and to learn more about the best conditions to provide for planting them in their own gardens - so we said - "join the Friends and have a look at what there is growing at the Botanic Gardens and then you can learn how to look after them".

An uncommon bushland beauty - but what do we call it?

Malcolm Cox

Uncommon plants may suffer unfair comparisons when we attempt to give them common names.

'Bushy rosemary' could do with another common name. It's not that common and has little in common with rosemary, but recently it has caught the eyes of those fortunate to be in the right place at the right time of its flowering in the natural bushland of MRBBG.



Cassinia subtropica [Fam. Asteraceae] is native to eastern Australia from parts of Queensland to N.E. New South Wales. It grows to 2 metres or so, has leaves that give off a curry-like smell when crushed, and could be mistaken by some for

groundsel (*Baccharis halimifolia*, an invasive weed) because of its similar flowering habit.



Cassinia subtropica flowering recently in natural bushland at Maroochy RBBG and being admired by Lynn Vlismas (President, Friends of MRBBG) and Lawrie Smith AM.

The genus *Cassinia* consists of over fifty species of shrubs and small trees. One of the more familiar, found in drier parts, is *Cassinia laevis*, a.k.a. rosemary bush, dead finish, curry bush or cough bush. Hence, finding yet another common name of glossy cough bush for *Cassinia subtropica* should not surprise anyone, but this brief comparison also suggests that the more common a plant is, the more common names it has.

In this case, ***Cassinia subtropica*** could become a desirable plant for many local gardens, and surely that same name is much more marketable - perhaps even a little 'exotic'.

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.

2026 Friends' Meetings & Events

Open Management Meetings

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

7 Aug Butterfly Garden Workshop

10 Aug Official opening Butterfly Garden

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

Pam Lather, Hannah Perry, Michelle Hansen, Kevin Mansfield, Libby Mansfield, Deborah Brown, Katie Fitzgerald, Matthew Law, Trish Mossop, Joy Thorne, Angelina Hajnci

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Secretary

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Membership:

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

A member of

