

Uki Garden Club



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PRESIDENT'S PIECE

What a month it's been. The weather continues to throw curveballs at us and changes dramatically from day to day. It's impossible to know what to wear in the morning so no wonder our plants are confused. Despite heavy soaking earlier in the year our soils are drying out fast as the hot winds tear through them. Meanwhile areas that have been boggy since February continue to hold water, making mowing difficult and dangerous.

On a bright side we have had two lovely garden club meetings. The first at Tess and Tony Thompson's place in Nobby's creek where we all enjoyed their warm hospitality (especially from Max their dog) and fine views. Apologies about the lack of photos – there was a technical problem in that department this month.

Our second meeting was in Budd Park, Murwillumbah and despite inclement weather about a dozen people turned up. Warm welcome to new member Veet Karen who is an author specialising in vegetarian and vegan cook books. More about the Food Group meeting on Page 4.

As November rolls on we are all looking forward to the Christmas party at Don and Sandra Capner's place. Two things are guaranteed – their garden will be looking superb and Lynn O'Hara will have organised a wonderful bumper Christmas raffle. See you all there.
 Julia

NOVEMBER GARDEN GATHERING

None of us were sure whether we would be able to park in Tess and Tony Thompson's paddock for the Garden Gathering in October as the weather had been so unpredictable. But the days leading up to the event were sunny and extremely windy so the grass had a chance to dry out. Tess and Tony have enjoyed living in their gorgeous Nobby's Creek property for 18 years, moving from England and since that time they have made many improvements to their five acres. They inherited some trees but have planted many more including blueberry ash, golden penda, gordonia, paperbark, pecan for autumn colour, poinciana,



sausage tree (pictured left), silky oak and tibouchina.

Lilypillies and pohutakawas (NS Christmas bush) create a windbreak against the strongest gusts. They removed 18 cocos palms but still have 50 left which will have to remain as they form a useful screen from the neighbours. A word of warning from Tess: "Don't plant eucalypts near the house – they constantly shed and are too expensive to remove." On

the plus side she's discovered that you can grow plants under camphors – her walking iris and cliveas are doing nicely.



They also have three vegie patches and an orchid house as well as pasture, kept mown by the six dexter cattle (pictured left) which they share with their neighbour. Tess uses them for regenerative agriculture, moving them from paddock to paddock.

SHOW AND TELL

It was all about flamboyance at the Garden Gathering this month!

Philip brought in some orchid cacti (*Epiphyllum superbum*) in various colours. They are different from the Queen of the night cactus as they usually have much bigger flowers and their blooms last for 3-4 days. [Sorry Philip, the photos we took of your wonderful blooms got lost in translation – Ed].

Don had a bucket full of beauties to share with us, including:



Alloxylon flammeum

Queensland waratah or red silky oak. A really flamboyant tree for parks and home gardens alike. Has an unusually long blooming period from spring through to early summer.



Deplanchea tetraphylla

Golden bouquet – a small tree to 6m from north Queensland. Atop the branches, mature trees have spectacular large bouquets of many yellow flowers. Likes to grow on the edge of other plantings.



Syzygium papyraceum

Paperbark lily pilli – can grow to 20 metres tall, the bark is papery, reddish fawn in colour. Leaves are thick and heavy, around 7cm long. Attractive fluffy pink or purple flowers are followed by bright purple large edible fruit.



And although she wasn't at the meeting Desirée Saunders submitted this photo of her wonderful epiphyllum in a hanging basket.

Epiphyllum is a genus of epiphytic plants in the cactus family which are native to Central and South America. The common names for these species include climbing cacti, orchid cacti and leaf cacti. There are numerous hybrids which are widely grown for their spectacular but short-lived flowers.

Photo: Desirée Saunders



FROGGY FRIENDS



New member Dinah Morgan houses the wallum sedge frog which is listed as vulnerable and thought to be almost extinct. Loss of habitat, invasive plants, and disease (most notably chytrid fungus) are contributing to the loss of population. Its habitat is restricted to coastal areas which are characterised by freshwater coastal foredune swamps, lagoon systems and associated vegetation communities occurring on low nutrient sandy soils of eastern Australia.

Dinah has a plaque from Tweed Shire Council in her garden declaring it a place of significant environmental interest.



Marie Luxford found this tiny little frog making itself quite at home in her house. Peter discovered when he tried to catch it that it was super-fast. It was identified as a brown striped marsh frog. This species is hardy and found in many different environments. It is very adaptable and appears to be quite tolerant of polluted water. It will leave its natural refuge of debris, logs, rocks and bushy plants to go singing in the rain. Listen out for his favourite note: a loud 'tok' that sounds like a tennis racquet hitting a ball.

Photo: Marie Luxford

GARDEN GATHERING QUESTION TIME

- Laverne brought along a packet of Eco-naturalure fruit fly deterrent. It doesn't work! Don suggested to use baits instead. Dinah recommends a solution of vegemite and water in a perforated pet bottle suspended from a tree.
- Jenny K is streetscaping Tumbulgum and asked for advice on what she could plant in large pots in full sun. Try camelia, coprosma, cordyline, cumquat, cypress, fiddle-leaf fig, dwarf lilypilly, hibiscus, Indian hawthorn, metersideros, New Zealand flax and olive. Kate Botham recommended the potting mix sold at Kingscliff Nursery. You can take your own containers or trailer and load yourself.
- Jackie spoke about her purple ginger, which turned out not to be a ginger as it was a tuber not a rhizome.
- Phil brought along some pots of arrow-leaf violet which he says is important butterfly food and also endangered in the wild.
- Don's bat plant has finally produced seeds but how to propagate them? Phil suggested Don gave them to him as they are difficult and he has a heated propagator.

DID YOU KNOW?



It is estimated that there are 10,000 species of spider in Australia. Spiders you are wise to beware of in northern New South Wales include redbacks, funnel webs, black or grey house spiders, wolf spiders and mouse spiders. A couple of spiders that are beneficial to your garden or home include the St Andrew's cross spider and huntsman spiders. The reback spider is a serious danger to humans.

COSTA'S RULE



When planting out natives use the following guide on how often to water:

- * Once a day for the first week
- * Once a week for the first month
- * Once a month for the first year

TITBITS FROM THE FOOD GROUP

Budd Park provided the setting for the November food group meeting which was the last of 2022. Tweed Shire Council has done a lovely job relandscaping the park and we all managed to keep dry by huddling around the generous undercover picnic table they thoughtfully provided.



We commandeered one of the barbeque benches for the swap table which was well-supplied with goodies including organic eggs, sprouting ginger, basil, hoya cuttings, pigeon pea seeds and daylilies to name just a few items.

Check out the view of the magnificent Tweed River!

Photo: Julia Hancock



But the crowning glory of the swap shop donations was definitely Sue and Hartmut's absolutely gorgeous New South Wales Christmas bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*) bunches of which we were all encouraged to take home with us. Where should I plant a Christmas bush in the Tweed? New South Wales Christmas bush enjoys full sun or a partly shaded spot. It prefers a sandy, well-draining soil, so if you have clay soil, make sure to dig through gypsum and a good garden mix. It will do better in a spot where it has some protection from the wind. It lasts for quite a long time as a cut flower.



Photo: Julia Hancock

For a bit of fun Julia devised a somewhat fiendishly difficult horticultural multiple-choice quiz which saw the group split up into four teams to put their heads together to answer the 20 questions. Hartmut, Judi and Peter were the champions, scoring an impressive 15/20 with their combined knowledge. Each member of the team took home a container of slow-release fertiliser for their efforts.



Jenny was the winner of the lucky door prize, a basket of *Dendrobium kingianum*, commonly known as the pink rock orchid. Although it often grows on rocks in the wild it also does well tied to a tree or grown in a hanging basket. It features thin, spreading leaves and spikes of up to fifteen, usually pink flowers in late winter to spring.

FOOD GROUP QUESTION TIME

It was a short discussion during at the Food Group meeting as we were all mindful of the weather closing in on us. Topics raised included:

- Sue brought our attention to the new issue of the ABC's *Organic Gardener*, Issue 137 Early Summer 2022 which has a very good article about growing pumpkins 'Pumpkins All-Season Survival Food' telling us how we can extend the supply of this valuable foodstuff in our gardens.
- Trish recommended 'Gem Squash' as a very good food. You have to buy the whole squash at Singh's grocery in Tweed Valley Way, scrape out the seeds and then cook the pulp. Plant some of the seeds and dry the rest for later.
- Veet wondered which pumpkin variety produces pepitas? Pepitas and pumpkin seeds are actually two different things. A pepita is harvested from specific hull-less pumpkin varieties, known as Styrian or Oil Seed pumpkins. They have names like 'Lady Godiva', 'Naked Bear' and 'Kakai'. Any other variety of pumpkin produces a hulled seed that's fibrous and less tender.
- Jenny's beetroots are being chomped – by what? Sounds like rats. There are a few around at the moment. Trap them using organic peanut butter as bait (recommended by Veet).
- Heather wants to buy a native bee hive. Are they a lot of work? Alan advised that they weren't, in fact you could usually just 'set and forget'. He gave two useful pointers: 1) Try and buy them from a source close to where their new home will be; and 2) some suppliers offer a warranty as they can be tricky to start with. Don't forget! 'No bee, no me'.

GET WELL SOON DOT

Dot Francis is now back home after an emergency operation in early November. Her daughter Heather is down from Queensland keeping an eye on Mum and daughter Michelle from Victoria is due soon to join help Dot make a swift and complete recovery.

CAN ANYONE SUPPLY THESE PLEASE?

Julia is on the scrounge for 8" or 200mm plastic pots (no bigger or smaller thanks) and any size hanging baskets that are no longer needed by members. Between now and Christmas she plans to propagate lots of plants to sell at her open garden next August.



Also, she would like cardboard tea boxes for use in seed displays for the seed workshop next year. Anyone who is into seed saving will no doubt be collecting over the summer months. Don't forget that Murwillumbah Library is always happy to receive seeds for their giveaway rack. And, of course there is also the club's handy seed box which is well-maintained by Hartmut.

BEWARE HAY FEVER SUFFERERS

Recent reports throughout the media suggest that this year's wet weather has caused an unusually large crop of grass seeds. Hay fever is an allergic reaction to pollen. When these tiny particles come into contact with the cells that line your mouth, nose, eyes and throat, they irritate them and trigger an allergic reaction. Vulnerable people should try the following:

- put Vaseline around your nostrils to trap pollen;
- wear wraparound sunglasses to stop pollen getting into your eyes;
- shower and change your clothes after you have been outside to wash pollen off;
- stay indoors whenever possible;
- keep windows and doors shut as much as possible;
- keep a supply of antihistamine medication on hand.

NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Uki Garden Club's Garden Gathering – our last of the year – will be held on Saturday 26 November at the home of Don and Sandra Capner, Morningsong, 108 Farrants Road, Farrants Hill from 430pm to 6.30pm.

- The Club will provide soft drinks and bubbly but members are asked to contribute a plate of nibbles to share. Please also bring a glass, cutlery, crockery, hat and a chair.
- We won't be having our usual swap table but if you would like to participate in the Kris Kringle please bring a home-made gift to the value of \$10.
- And there will be a monster raffle!



As we won't be having a meeting in December or January the newsletter will be a slim edition. I would like to do a feature on members' favourite garden tools and why they find them so useful. I'll be making notes at the Xmas meeting. Also, I would welcome articles from those members who have promised them. Thanks very much – Ed.

And thanks, as always, to our printer – Sandra Guthrie at Poster Paradise, Murwillumbah