

Friends OF THE Gold Coast



Regional
Botanic
Gardens

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Autumn Makeover

Planting Day

Sunday 25th March 2007

8am start

Rosser Park, Ashmore Road

Sausage sizzle, Friends merchandise, books
and local native plants for sale
Meet at northern end of the
Mangroves to Mountains transect

Notice of Friends General Meeting

Monday 5.30pm

2nd April 2007

Meeting Room 4 – Nerang Bicentennial
Centre, Nerang Southport Road, Nerang
All Friends Members welcome!

f r i e n d s n e w s

Friends of the Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens Incorporated

March 2007

Volume 9, Issue 1

Letter from the President

I recently had a phone call from my brother-in-law who lives at Nerang. He phoned to let me know that after living on the Gold Coast for most of his 39 years, he had finally visited the Gardens for the first time just the other day. Finding himself with some time in between meetings, he had stopped in for a look and was simply blown away by what he found. Couples enjoying a quiet picnic in beautiful surroundings, children laughing and playing, people strolling through the display gardens, he was surprised and delighted with what he found. He went on to say that if this was just the beginning, he couldn't wait to see the Gardens when they really get going!



I thought I would share this with you, as for me, it provided a timely reminder that there are many people, local and from afar, who visit and enjoy the Gardens every day; and while at times it is a lot of hard work, it is indeed worthwhile and importantly... appreciated.

Thank you to everyone who attended our December Planting Day and AGM. Our focus for the day was infill planting and mulching of the hillside leading up to Ashmore Road... the final rise of the future Mangroves to Mountains walkway. On what was a typically "steamy" Summer Gold Coast day, it was fantastic to see a number of new members participating and helping make the day a real success. Thanks to the Friends Secretary, Mary Woods, for the prompt and professional preparation of the AGM Minutes, which all members will receive.

At the December AGM we said farewell to the Gardens' inaugural curator and project manager, Mr Kit Smith. Kit has left Council to pursue other professional interests in Australia and abroad. On behalf of the Friends I would like to thank Kit for his efforts and enthusiasm over the past 3 years and we wish him and his family well for the future.

We welcome Col Brown to the Gardens. As Council's Coordinator for Citywide Greening, Col is acting in a caretaker role while a new curator is appointed. Members of the Management Committee have already met with Col to address outstanding issues and we look forward to his involvement in the project. You will find Col's comments in this month's "Council Corner".

The big question still on everyone's lips is "what's happening with the RCP funding"? Over recent editions we have reported on the Friends' support of Council's bid for funding under the state government grants program known as the Regional Centres Program. As I write, this application is still officially "pending", however I can report that the Friends have written to a number of government officials, including member for Surfers Paradise, Mr John Paul Langbroek, asking for their support. We are hoping for an announcement very soon... all I can say is "fingers crossed" and watch this space!

Our Autumn Planting Day is only a few weeks away... on Sunday 25th March. The theme for this day is "Autumn Make-over" and Friends and guests are invited to come along from 8 - 10am to help in a variety of tasks, from infill planting to mulching and general maintenance of the Mangroves to Mountains section.

The Gold Coast Bushwalkers Club have been our special partners at the Gardens, with their valuable donation of plants and "manpower" in establishing the Butterfly Gardens. I am pleased to announce that we will be joined by the "Bushies" at our planting day for a special celebration... so come along to the Gardens on the 25th and help make the day a special one.

I'll see you there!

Nick Bloor MPLA MAIH

0411 348 611



Council Corner...

Waiting, waiting..... Council is eagerly awaiting the results of the State Governments Regional Centres Program (RCP) funding application. Currently all is quiet, but we are still optimistic of a successful outcome. If approved, the funding will enable the progression of the World Subtropical Gardens & Gardens Entrance design this year & the commencement of construction in 2008.

2006 has been a busy year with the completion of the Sensory Gardens, Horticultural Display Gardens & the commencement of the Mangroves to Mountains plantings & Lake Boardwalks. We are aware of several outstanding horticultural issues, which are currently being addressed with the assistance of the Friends.

Awards

Recently Scape Shapes Landscape Contractors took out major honours for the Botanic Gardens Rotary Sensory Gardens at the 2006 Landscape Construction Excellence Awards for commercial

construction, maintenance and irrigation. This is a major achievement which we will look to replicate in future stages. For further details please visit www.scapeshapes.com.au. A special thanks goes to Rotary International & the Friends for their involvement & support.

Resourcing

As some of you may be aware, in December the Botanic Gardens Curator, Kit Smith, resigned from Council to pursue other interests. Kit has done an outstanding job and his passion & enthusiasm will be greatly missed in the future progression of the Gardens. To assist with maintaining project momentum, Council will shortly be advertising the Curators position for the ongoing development.

As you enjoy the Gardens you will see some additional friendly faces. Council has appointed an interim Senior Horticultural Maintenance Planner, Michael Jacques, to oversee the maintenance and vegetation management. He has previously been involved in the maintenance of Brisbane's Southbank and has extensive experience in landscape maintenance, construction & maintenance planning. Having a strong family history in the rose industry, Michael is currently working with council to assist in the establishment of a horticultural maintenance requirement 'base line' for Rosser Park.

You'll also see me! As Council's Parks & Recreational Services' Coordinator for Citywide Greening, the Botanic Gardens is strategically aligned with Council's other proactive Greening activities such as street & park tree planting, development of Council's Greening Strategy, Greenheart open space parklands & associated green corridor opportunities to offset carbon emissions across the city.

Upcoming works

Lake Sediment Control

Council is currently tendering the contract of the removal of sediment currently located in the thick layer on the bottom of the lake. The removal of this layer will dramatically improve current water quality issues & assist in the prevention of algae blooms. More information will be made available to the Friends' once tenders are reviewed. A large



emphasis has been placed on achieving a high quality result whilst minimising disruption to park users & amelioration of potential odour issues associated with the works.

Finally, my quote for this issue:

"To plant trees is to give body and life to one's dreams of a better world." - Russell Page

Col Brown



The following report was written by Kit Smith in late November 2006 and was his last report for the Friends as Curator for the Gardens.

A prior report included a list of 16 topics that form part of the expansion and roll-out of the botanic gardens.

Here's the list and a quick overview of the status of each.

1. MANGROVE TO MOUNTAIN TRANSECT
2. HORTICULTURAL DISPLAY GARDENS
3. SENSORY GARDENS
4. WATER REGIME
5. ROSE GARDENS
6. ART & SCULPTURE
7. SIGNAGE
8. EVENTS & MEDIA STRATEGY
9. VISITOR SERVICES
10. MAINTENANCE SERVICES
11. RESEARCH

12. STAGE 2 OPTIONS
13. BUDGETS & GRANTS
14. PEOPLE
15. HISTORY
16. NEW PLANTS

Progress in many of these endeavours is there for all to see, with the Mangrove to Mountain (1) collection, the Horticultural Display Garden (2), the Sensory Garden (3) and the Rose collection (5) all blooming and growing with gusto. Drafts of the signage (7) and the public art (6) master plans are now ready for issue, the water strategy (4) has been through an intensive investigation and planning phase with initial works due to commence before Christmas, events (8) such as the planting days and visiting groups have happened according to plan and the media strategy for the gardens (8 again) has been positively reported. Visitor numbers (9) are rising, maintenance resources (10) are expanding, and whilst there is limited formal research (11) at this early stage of the gardens, there has been significant work carried out to prepare and submit grant applications (13) for Stage 2 (12), with the possibility to expand our project budget significantly over the next two to three years. The people (14) who support the gardens and in particular the Friends have worked tirelessly to maintain the energy and commitment to a project that often seems to have more new challenges than a finishing point. The presentation of the Friends Annual Report set a new bench mark, and congratulations go out to all those involved. Previous issues of this newsletter covered the first 20 years of history (15) of Rosser Park with thanks to Helen Kelso, and every three months the community planting days bring new plants (16) to enjoy.

But that's only the short story, and it missed the current projects that are actually under construction at the moment! So here's the latest news.

Decks in the main lake.

The Botanic Gardens is a place to walk and enjoy the outdoors, to explore the delights of garden displays and to find a peaceful spot with a sublime view. The ring road allows people to drive right into the park, but forces everyone to walk on the road. This is not the best outcome for our park visitors, and the new decks will provide the missing connections of the walk beside the lake. Bridging the fountain stream, connecting the park areas near the dam wall and providing links to all sections of the Horticultural Display Garden and Sensory Garden, the new decks provide a walking circuit that will eventually lead into



One of the lakes at Rosser Park

the World Subtropical Garden sector, the future visitors centre, the top of the Mangrove to Mountain trail and the park entrance.

The decks and paths are fully accessible and complement the existing island decks. They offer new views over water and into the various garden displays and open the hill side edge to greater use. The full circuit promises to become the favourite short walk for residents and visitors. The Friends will be involved next year to add trees for shade and canopy on the exposed sections of the circuit, and perhaps to plant display gardens to complement those on the other side of the lake. Public art and signage is planned to complete the picture.

The contract works are expected to be complete by mid December, with embellishments and planting planned for 2007.

Paths in the Off Leash area

The Community Jobs Program is a Federal- Council partnership that provides training for unemployed locals to develop work skills, gain certificate level training and construction experience and then find jobs in the region. The project underway in the flood channel beside the Nerang River has been the completion of a path circuit for dog owners that defines the limits of the off-leash area and forms the future first stage of pathway for the Mangrove end of the Mountain to Mangrove trail.

Generous funding from Councillor Suzie Douglas supported this project, and financed the materials and resources for the trainees to install. The four month long program was beset by rain in the first months but the last sections of path have now been poured and the circuit is complete. Agricultural drainage lines have improved some low-lying areas and drainage has also been installed in the rose gardens. Extensive amounts of mulch were installed under the boundary trees and Mangrove to Mountain areas during the wettest weeks. The team was trained and managed by Beau Thomasson, and over half the original starters now have jobs. Congratulations to all the crew for a job well done.

Level 4 water restrictions and the Water Management Regime

Tankers now provide most of the recycled water to keep our gardens moist, as the drought conditions further restrict water resources and lake levels start to drop. The current procedure is



Cr Suzie Douglas—strong supporter of the Gardens

to provide deep watering up to twice a week. Hoses and a storage container have been ordered to enable hand watering in the Mangrove to Mountain sector.

The first tangible steps of the long term Water Management Regime are set to commence.

Tenders are to be called to remove the sludge layer from the lakes and billabongs. Removal of this material is expected to reduce the high levels of algae currently seen. However this messy project has a silver lining, as the sludge is intended to be dried and then composted on site to provide a high quality soil for use in the World Subtropical Garden areas. You may have noticed how poor the soil is in the area near the playground and temporary car park, especially compared to the fertile soils under the latest September planting areas. This is a result of past filling of the World Subtropical Garden area with excavated material from the Molendinar water transfer site near Nerang. This source supplied virtually no soil and only infertile sub grade material. The Master Plan recognised this drawback, and recommended substantial soil volumes be brought onto the site to establish suitable conditions for plant growth. Our intention is to recycle available material from the billabongs and lake to provide this needed resource. It is subject to detailed technical investigation by consultants.



Establishment of wetlands along the entire billabong area and provision of a soil filter scheme near the site of the visitors centre are also planned for 2007. The outcome allows the use of recycled water for irrigation and lake top-up with low tech biological filtering provided by the soil filter and the wetlands. This system also has the capacity to provide ongoing filtering of existing lake waters to establish suitable water quality in the future. The plan is to be free of drought constraints by the end of 2007. In the mean time the tankers will provide the necessary moisture to support our gardens over the drought.

Thanks for your support in 2006 and best wishes to all for the festive season.

The future of the Botanic Gardens promises great things, and I look forward to seeing everyone at the December planting day.

Kit Smith



The following story is from 15th Australian Weeds Conference, Adelaide, 24-28 Sept 2006

Birds Spreading Murraya in Rainforest

Researchers have found that the popular hedge plant, orange jasmine, or Murraya, widely available from commercial nurseries in Australia, is invading native bushland and rainforest habitats in Queensland with the help of native birds.

Officially known as *Murraya paniculata cv exotica* (L.) Jack, it produces fleshy, orange-red fruits favoured by

local figbirds. Available from late winter to late spring, the fruits are eaten and the harder seeds eventually deposited when the birds return to the rainforest. Research shows that 75% of the seed remains viable after passing through a bird's gut.

Concerns have been raised that recent large-scale plantings have increased the likelihood that Murraya will become a bird-dispersed environmental weed in subtropical eastern Australia.

A survey of rainforest pockets in the Brisbane area found that all remnants examined had been invaded by Murraya plants. The average density was one plant per 23 square metres, with some up to 1.7 metres high. Researchers say the answer is to encourage gardeners and landscapers not to plant Murraya near remnant rainforest or creekline habitats, and to seek advice on suitable native alternatives from local nurseries. In south east Queensland, native plants suitable as replacement food plants for figbirds include native figs, native palm lilies, the hard quandong and rough leaved elm.

Nurseries are now selling a cutting-grown variety of Murraya described as 'non-fruiting'. However, researchers would like to undertake controlled studies to verify sterility of the variety before it is promoted widely as an environmentally sound option to the fruiting Murraya often observed in the suburbs of south-east Queensland.

Contact: Dr Gabrielle Vivian-Smith

Qld DNRMW/Weeds CRC – 07-3375 0739



Friends Noticeboard



2007 Planting Days

Sunday 25 March - 8-10am - Autumn Makeover
Sunday 29 July - Winter Planting Day
Sunday 16 September - Spring Planting Day
Sunday 2 December - Summer Planting Day & AGM

Community Planting starts 9am. All Friends Members welcome 8am to help with plant layout & preparation. Enquiries to Mary Woods (Secretary) 0410 576 279

Carnival of Flowers!

The Friends have booked a bus to Toowoomba on Saturday 22nd September for the Carnival of Flowers. This is always a great show and guaranteed to be a day not to miss.

Tickets... \$30 for Friends members and \$45 for non-members. To book your tickets or for further information, call Gary Lyall on 0402 715 156.

AusPlants Special Interest Group

All Friends are invited to take part in the AusPlants program for 2007 (Australian Plants Special Interest Group of the Friends). All meetings are held at Genesearch, 14 Technology Drive, Arundel at 7.30pm. For more details or to check for changes phone Lyn on 5537 3354.

Seminar Topics for early 2007:

March 27th – 'Pruning for shape & vitality' with Kate Heffernan & Alan Donaldson

April 24th - 'Climate change: adaptable plants & watering tips' + 'An Inconvenient Truth' (DVD)

May 22nd – 'Orchids, the family & how to grow them', Native Orchid Society speaker

June 26th - 'Seeds: collection, storage, germination'

July 24th - 'Learn to identify pea flowers'

August 28th - Montane Heath flowers, Glenn Leiper

September 25th - Ferns Dan & Wendy Johnston

October 23rd - AusPlants AGM; favourite plants & places

November 27th - Growing rainforest plants

December 9th - Christmas lunch

AusPlants Field Excursions for 2007:

April Sun 29th - Ipswich: Rosewood Scrub Arboretum

April 22-29th - Myall Park BG working bee

May - Garden visit (to be announced)

June Sun 3rd - World Environment Day Currumbin

June 9-11th - Bribie Island Orchid Expo

June Sat 30th - Elanora Wetland (seeds)

July Sat 7th & Sun 8th - Mudgeeraba Show

July Sun 29th - Gala Tree Planting Day, Rosser Park

Aug. 31st - 2nd Sept. - Lennox Head (camping / cabins)

Aug. 22nd – 2nd Sept. - Sunshine Coast Wildflower Festival

Sept. 16th - Rosser Park Planting Day (Biodiversity month)

Sept. 22nd - Toowoomba Carnival Flowers

Oct 26th-28th - Girraween National Park (camping / cabins)

Nov. 25th - Clagiraba Cons.Area + gardens visit

Native Bee Keeping Workshop

Dr Tim Heard will present a fascinating interpretation of these intriguing insects and their native bush homes. Learn about the latest in artificial hives that enable us to keep stingless bees, as an interesting hobby, for their unique honey, and to enable them to continue to pollinate their native foods and our crop plants.

This full day workshop costs \$5 which includes morning and afternoon tea. Lunch can be provided for a cost of \$6. If you require lunch please advise and pay at the time of booking.

Date: Saturday 17th March 2007-02-14

Time: 9.00am – 4pm. Please meet at 8.45am

Venue: IndigiScapes (Tallowwood room)

What to bring: Hat, sunscreen.

Trainer – Tim Heard

Cost: \$5 plus a refundable \$25 deposit.

Payment of \$30 must be made by Wednesday 14th March. \$25 deposit will be refunded upon registration on the morning of the workshop. Please make cheques payable to Redland Shire Council.

RSVP: Wednesday 14th March Redlands Indigiscape Centre
17 Runnymede Rd, Capalaba, 4157 07 3824 8611

gavinha@redland.qld.gov.au



We Made WIKI!

Thanks to some local wiki editors there is now an official entry in this Worldwide Online Encyclopaedia for the Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens!

Have a look for yourself...

www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_Coast_Regional_Botanic_Gardens

A big thank you...

to the office of John-Paul Langbroek – local MP for Surfers Paradise, for generously providing photocopying services for our newsletter!

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