
GARDENS GAZETTE

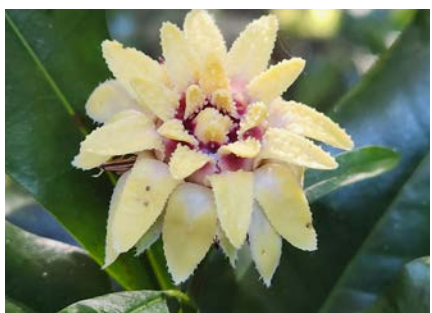
AUGUST 2026

Newsletter for Friends of the Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens Inc



In this Issue

- News from the Nursery
- Tracking an invisible threat -
Air sampling for Myrtle Rust
- Soil improvement update
- Geoff Walker's century milestone



NEW! FLRBG Greeting Cards

Perfect for birthdays, thank-yous, and everything in between.

12 beautiful full-colour cards featuring local plants and animals, photographed by the Friends of Lismore Rainforest Botanic Gardens. Left blank inside for your own message... a thoughtful gift, or a treat for yourself.

\$20 for a set of 12. Available during the Sculpture Exhibition, along with our 2027 calendars for **\$15**.

To purchase a set, send an email: publicity@friendslrbg.com.au

Card 1: *Lambertia formosa*
Mountain Devil.
Photo: Michelle Garrett

Card 2: *Davidsonia johnsonii*
Smooth Davidson's Plum.
Photo: Florence Treverrow

Card 3: *Eupomatia bennettii*
Small Bolwarra
Photo: Pauline Vickers

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to acknowledge those who are supporting us financially and/or with their knowledge, skills and experience.

Andrew and Jeni Binns,
Bruce Jobson Plumbing,
Fair Dinkum Constructions,
Ginger Blue Graphic Design,
Graham Cook

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Interactive Landscapes

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Jenny Dowell,
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Matthews Fabrication,
Millars Metal Imaging,
Paul Boxsell LCC Sign Shop,
Peter Gow Electrical

Richmond Sand, Gravel &
Landscaping,

RBG at Mt Annan,
Southern Cross Uni,
Susan Oliver Graphic Design,
Vicki Brooke,
Waste Facility staff

and all who have supported us in any way including some who have requested to remain anonymous.

We couldn't do it without you -
THANK YOU!



Kids' flower art on Open Day 2026

THE FLRBG COMMITTEE

Executive

President - Tracey Whitby
publicity@friendslrbg.com.au

Vice President - Hazel Bridgett

Secretary/Treasurer -
Florence Treverrow
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Find us on the web at -
friendslrbg.com.au

Find us on Facebook:
facebook.com/FLRBG

Friends of Lismore
Rainforest Botanic Gardens
PO Box 1327
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Cover photo:

Syzygium moorei is a rare, vulnerable sub tropical rainforest tree, growing on volcanic soils in the Mount Warning area of north east New South Wales and south east Queensland, Australia. The berry is white or pale green, an excellent ingredient in mixed preserves.

In nature
nothing exists
alone...

Rachel Carson



This newsletter contains active links to websites, email and references. Just click the coloured text to be directed to an external site.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We welcome **Steve Brooke** from *Lismore City Council* who began working with our team recently. Steve has a passion for native plants and has been busy in all areas of the Gardens. The Gardens are looking particularly happy with Steve's special care. Lismore has received about 650mm of rain since the beginning of February, with unusually high winter totals. This has slowed some of our projects for 2026, such as the relocation of the nursery, new plantings in the research area and necessitated some repairs to entrance roads, but the plants are thriving and growth is strong.

Keep up to date via the website and Facebook with news about our **Spring Sculpture Exhibition, (Re)Create**. Entrants have used natural, recycled or found objects to make something new. The opening event and prize giving begins at **10am on Sunday 20th September**. The exhibition is free and will run until Sunday 18th October.

The gates will be open weekdays from 7.30 am till 3.30 pm and on weekends from 9 am till 4pm. (Closed public holiday Monday 5th October) Over thirty sculptures will be on display throughout the Gardens, with entries from preschool age students to professional adults. Visitors can vote for their favourite sculpture. Guided walks will be available during the exhibition by contacting publicity@friendslrbg.com.au. Schools and community groups of over 15 are encouraged to book a walk.

We are very grateful for a generous donation from the **Tweed Botanic Gardens**. After many years of fund raising and unsuccessfully searching for a suitable site, the team at Tweed have decided to call it a day. A bitter-sweet gathering was held in May when **Julia Hancock** and a few of their team visited us and donated over \$11,000 to the Lismore Rainforest BG. They chose to ask us to use the money to relocate the nursery, which has made this a much easier task for us. The group also donated many books from their library.

Visitors will notice that our **Cool Cubby** is being moved a short distance to make way for the nursery. We know it is popular with youngsters, so we hope to have it back in action very soon.

Many thanks to **Hazel Bridgett** who has spent long hours completing grant applications for a new work shed for the Gardens. It is an essential piece of infrastructure for any Botanic Gardens. We are feeling positive and soon hope to have a place to charge batteries, construct, paint and repair structures and house the tools and machinery.

New volunteers are always very welcome. Just come along on any Wednesday morning from 8 am to 11 am. Drive on past the Visitors Centre to the second parking area where we meet, catch up on news, share gardening tips and produce, and then grab our tools and get to work. There are also many jobs in the nursery, if you'd like to learn or bring your knowledge with you. Contact us any time on **0450 596 705** or email membership@friendslrbg.com.au

Photos: Top: **Steve Brooke** our new LCC gardener
Middle: **Julia Hancock** and **Nellmary McEwan** from the **Tweed Gardens** presenting the cheque for over \$11,000

Bottom: Our cute koala, just one of our existing sculptures in the gardens.

Tracey Whitby
publicity@friendslrbg.com.au
FLRBG July 2026



NEWS FROM THE NURSERY

Plant sales on **Botanic Gardens Open Day** in May and during **Graeme's Native Bees as Pollinators** guided walk in June were a great success. Offering endemic plants for sale is a great opportunity for us to connect with people and share knowledge about our wonderful diverse plant life, especially within a radius of two hundred kilometres of Lismore. We not only have *rainforest plants* but also species that can grow in drier coastal, and eucalypt forests. Plants such as *orchids*, *vines*, *grasses*, *sedges*, and *lilies* to name a few.

We invite people to incorporate endemic plants into their gardens, whether large or small, in courtyards, and even on decks and in well-lit interiors. Many of our rainforest species can be grown successfully as indoor pot plants and bonsais.

Of course, our primary purpose is to supply plants needed by our Botanic Gardens, but increasingly we are providing plants for the wider area. To do this we need to take note of what people are most interested in, so that we can go back to our propagating area and germinate these species.

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This is not a simple task as first we need to source the seed or fruit or cutting material. Material must be sourced ethically, positively identified with date and area of collecting and by whom. We do source seeds and fruit from our Rainforest Botanic Gardens but also from the wider area as genetic diversity is important.

On open day we had many requests for **Blue Tongue** (*Melastoma affine*) and we ran out of this plant. We sometimes hear that this plant has not survived in people's gardens, but it is, in fact, easy to grow once you understand its needs. It is certainly worthwhile, growing with beautiful leaves and outstanding mauve pink flowers from Spring to Autumn.

The Autumn fruit is sweet and edible, staining the tongue blue, giving rise to the name **Blue Tongue**. In the wild it is often found on the edges of swamps in sandy peat and so we know that it cannot withstand long term dry conditions and likes good drainage and some sun protection. It is a bushy shrub growing to two metres, filling a space quickly, but requiring pruning to keep compact.

Our current focus is on moving the Nursery to a site very near the Visitors Centre in the next six months, where it will be much more accessible for everyone.

Jenny Wilson



Top - Bottom: *Melastoma affine* Blue Tongue – shrub, flower and fruit.

UPDATE ON SOIL IMPROVEMENT

In March and May, I attended a **Nutrient Smart Soils** workshop provided by the **Local Land Service**. This workshop was primarily for farmers but a lot of the information was relevant and helpful. I now have a much better understanding of our previous soil analysis, the soil we are dealing with, and what we can, and should do, by way of remediation.

At the start of the workshop, we were given maps showing aerial view, ag land capability and soil types. According to the second map the gardens area has '**Extremely severe limitations**' so it is lucky we are not into agriculture.

We were asked to do a soil test (free analysis) as part of the workshop so we could have a discussion about the results and improve our understanding of what the tests mean. For the gardens, we decided to use the **Wilson's Park planting** and I asked if I could make one sample of 10cm deep and one 10 to 20cm deep so that we could get a better understanding of the subsoil.

We were also introduced to the **Northern Rivers Soil Health Card**. This explains a series of simple tests that landholders can use to assess the biological and physical properties of their soils as a supplement to soil analysis. The recommended time to do the tests is in autumn.

The key takeaways from the workshop are that we need to increase organic matter, improve aeration, where possible use raised beds, and that we should add gypsum. So basically, we are on the right track except for the gypsum.

...the key takeaways from the workshop are that we need to increase organic matter, improve aeration, where possible use raised beds, and that we should add gypsum...

In my last article I said that a test had revealed the garden's soil did not need gypsum. However, that test is to determine if gypsum will help with soil structure. Gypsum is actually needed because we need to add calcium without making the soil more alkaline. This is because the levels of magnesium are quite high and it is important to have more than twice as much calcium compared to magnesium. The ratio in the gardens is just within the correct range, possibly because of a previous gypsum application a few years ago. We will apply gypsum to most of the garden areas in August.

We hope to be able to do another soil analysis as well as a soil health assessment next autumn.

If anyone would be interested in helping with the soil sampling, on a weekend if necessary, we would be most grateful. Contact secretary@friendslrbg.com.au

Florence Treverrow

STONE CIRCLE GLADE.

A RAINFOREST ARBOUR

From the pine forest take the upward track and follow its loops and bends as it goes higher until you come to the Stone Circle Glade.

The Glade is fringed by weathered rocks and overlooked by a variety of rainforest plants.

Do not pass by but enter in and stay a while. Enjoy its quiet stillness and the beauty of its intense greenery.

It is a peaceful place.

From Irene



TRACKING AN INVISIBLE THREAT: AIR SAMPLING FOR MYRTLE RUST

Myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) is one of the most serious fungal threats facing Australia's native plants – attacking eucalypts, bottlebrushes, tea trees and other myrtle-family species that are central to our landscape. It spreads on the wind as microscopic spores, which has always made it hard to catch early. Until now, we've largely had to wait for visible symptoms before we could act.

In partnership with Lismore Rainforest Botanic Garden, and eight other botanic gardens around the nation, a *Saving Native Species* project was undertaken to demonstrate a new approach for the surveillance of airborne Myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*), a serious fungal disease threatening iconic Australian species.

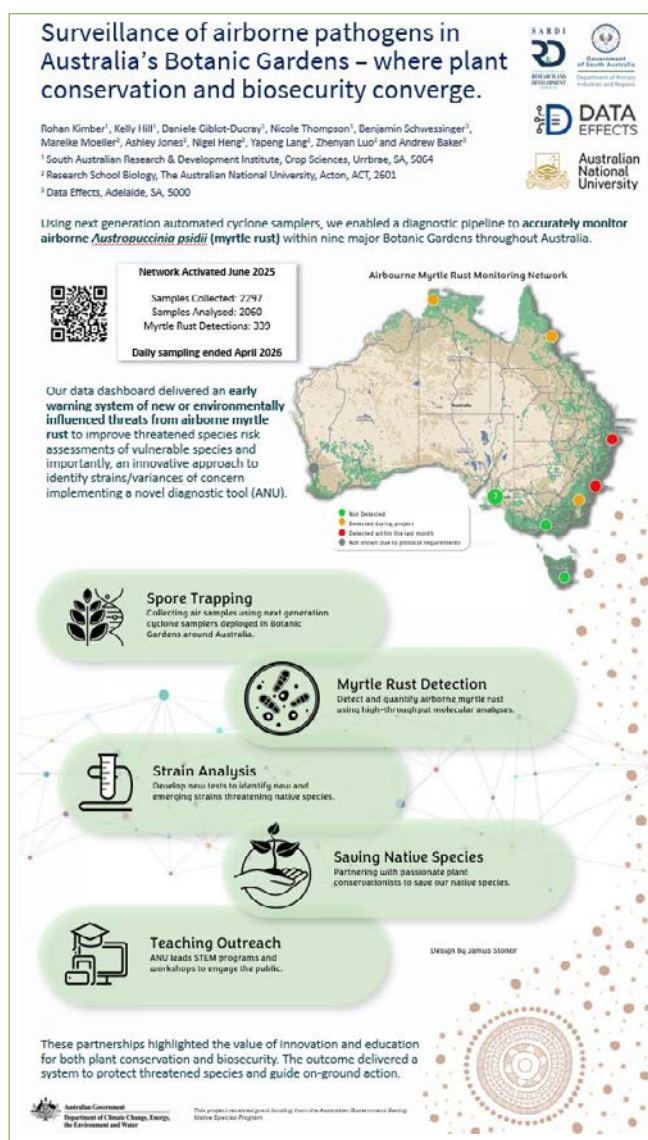
This system integrated plant health surveillance systems and molecular diagnostics from SARDI, innovative technologies and data management solutions from Data Effects, and cutting-edge molecular plant pathology techniques from ANU School of Biology. Over 2300 air samples were collected over 8 months in 2025, from our national monitoring network covering nine major Botanic Gardens. There were 350 myrtle rust detections reported which occurred in five botanic gardens, Darwin, Cairns, Lismore, Sydney and Canberra. Visualised time-plots were reported to the project website sporetracker.com.au showing 'Peak' airborne myrtle rust occurred in July for the northern site trending to October in the southern-most sites.

Of 136 samples, positive for myrtle rust, submitted to ANU for a complex triage process for effective sequencing and analysis for strain determination, there were 22 samples successfully confirmed as the one pandemic biotype of *A. psidii*. This is the known strain that has been reported in Australia to date, and all were collected from the Lismore Rainforest Botanic Garden in New South Wales. The project team believe this system is the first demonstration of air sampling, pathogen load profiling to species and +/- strain level confirmation to airborne pathogens in scientific literature.

This was only possible through the valuable participation of the Botanic garden partners to showcase a potential national airborne myrtle rust alert system and examine the dispersal behaviour of this pathogen at the monitoring site for each site. Importantly, at the conclusion of air sampling in the project, no exotic strains of myrtle rust were identified using the novel strain determination tool. This highlighted the need for this type of surveillance and its role for management of disease threats to Australian flora and was a successful outcome of stakeholder engagement and promotion to the greater public.

This project received grant funding from the Australian Government Saving Native Species Program.

Dr Rohan Kimber (PIRSA-SADI)
Research Scientist - South Australian Research and Development Institute -
SARDI | Primary Industries and Regions



Top: John and Don changing the vials in the datafx Myrtle Rust air sampler in December 2025.

Bottom: Content from the project presentation at the recent Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative conference in Melbourne in May.

THE CARRONIA VINE AND THE PINK UNDERWING MOTH



The Carronia Vine *Carronia multiseptalea* is a woody vine in the family *Menispermaceae*. It is the sole host plant for the Southern Pink Underwing Moth *Phyllodes imperialis smithersi*, a rare moth found in the subtropical rainforests of Northern NSW and Southeast Queensland. It is listed as an Endangered Species in both NSW and Queensland.

The Southern Pink Underwing Moth is named for the brilliant pink patches on its dark hindwing. The brown forewings are approximately 6cm long with white spots on the underside. When resting the moth resembles a dead leaf.

The caterpillars go through 4 instars. When young, in their first instar, caterpillars are dull brown. When they reach their 4th instar, they develop a unique and dramatic threat display. When alarmed, they mimic a predator with two large eye spots and a double row of white 'teeth'.

We have planted two Carronia vines on arches near the visitors' centre and have another in the Wilson's Park Species Garden. Hopefully we are able to attract these extraordinary moths and help ensure their survival

References:

threatenedspecies.bionet.nsw.gov.au/

plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/

bie.ala.org.au/species/ALA_DR30474_521



Main image: A caterpillar showing its 'threat' posture. Photo: Iain Stych

Inset: Carronia Vine Photo: Greg Tasney

Top right: Caterpillar in 1st instar. Photo: Iain Stych @ [instagram.com/iainstych](https://www.instagram.com/iainstych)

Middle right: As they grow, they become brown with darker markings to look like the dead leaves of their host vine plant. Photo: Greg Tasney@ [inaturalist](https://www.instagram.com/inaturalist)

Bottom right: Adult Southern Pink Underwing Moth.

The endangered Southern Pink Underwing Moth is identified by its brilliant array of pink and white spots on its large 14cm wingspan. Photo: Paul Donatiu

TREE PROFILE – Peter Gould

Red Apple is a medium to large tree of Subtropical Rainforest growing to 40m in height and 90cm in diameter.

Distribution:

From Cambridge Plateau west of Casino in NSW to Kin Kin in Queensland. It reaches its best development on red volcanic soils and is a common tree of the rainforests of the McPherson Range.

Flowers:

Small white flowers appear in panicles at the ends of branches from November to December.

Fruit:

The striking fruit that gives this tree its common name is a dark pink to red drupe produced in abundance. It is globose to ovoid in shape, 2 to 4cm in diameter, fleshy and contains a single seed.

The fruits are eaten by Eastern Rosellas, Pied Currawongs, Green Catbirds, Wompoo Fruit Doves and Topknot Pigeons. Fruit usually ripens from May to September. It is edible, and has been made into jam, but personally I don't think it has much to recommend it.

Leaves:

Leaves are opposite, simple, entire, elliptical, 7 to 13cm long and often protracted to a point.

Numerous oil dots may not be clearly visible in older leaves but can be seen in newer growth. Leaf stalks are 3 to 6mm long and often red. The new growth is bright red.

Bark:

The bark is smooth, greyish brown to light grey.

References:

LINK: plantnet.rbgsydns.gov.au

Floyd, A.G. 2008, *Rainforest trees of mainland south-eastern Australia*, Terania Rainforest Publishing, Terania Creek, NSW.

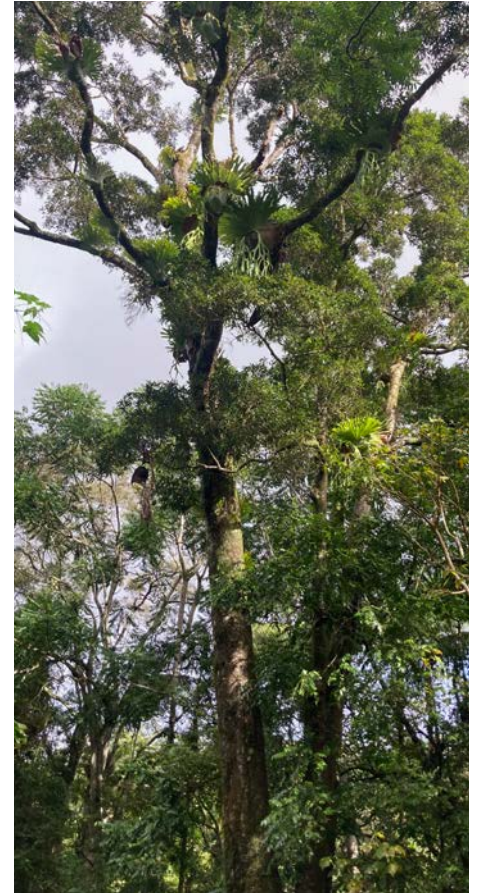
Harden, G., Mc Donald, B. and Williams, J. 2006, *Rainforest trees and shrubs: a field guide to their identification*, Gwen Harden Publishing, Nambucca Heads, NSW.

ACMENA INGENS SYN.

SYZYGIIUM INGENS

Common Name: **RED APPLE**

Family: **MYRTACEAE**



Top left: The smooth bark of a mature tree. Photo: P. Gould

Top right: A large tree on the roadside in Terania Creek. Photo: P. Gould

Middle left: The bright, red fruit that gives this tree its common name.

Middle right: The leaves showing the red branchlets and petioles. Photo: P. Gould

Bottom: An early botanical illustration with now redundant common and scientific names.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

World Environment Day (June 5) was celebrated with the global theme "*Inspired by Nature*", focusing on climate change and ecosystem restoration.

In Australia, this connects perfectly with the **Friends of Botanic Gardens networks**, which champion local conservation, native flora, and community education.



Photo: *Senna acclinis* Rainforest Cassia, with pollinator insect.



Did you know that bees* observe experienced foragers to learn new skills?

Joining a Botanic Gardens Friends group is a perfect way to learn new skills in a supportive environment.



★ Yes, it is amazing!

Research shows bees are incredibly sophisticated social learners that don't just copy peers, but can even watch others solve complex, multi-step puzzles and improve upon the techniques themselves.

Their learning abilities include:

Waggle Dance Mastery: Young honeybees observe the iconic '*waggle dance*' of older foragers to learn how to communicate the exact distance and direction of food sources.

Puzzle Solving: Studies on bumblebees reveal they can master two-step puzzle boxes to get nectar rewards simply by watching a trained "*demonstrator*" bee.

Knowledge Sharing: This learned information can spread across multiple generations of bees, suggesting they possess the capacity for social culture, a trait previously thought to be exclusive to humans.



⇐ Top: Graeme at his native bee info stall open day 26
Bottom: Jen and Liz with native plants for bee walk Feb 2026

TREE PROFILE – Peter Gould

ANTHOCARAPA NITIDULA

Common Name: **INCENSE CEDAR
OR BOG ONION**

Family: **MELIACEAE**

Incense Cedar is a small to medium sized tree of warm Subtropical Rainforests growing to a maximum of 27m and 60cm in diameter. It's trunk is not buttressed.

Distribution:

There are two disjunct populations; the southern one extends from Woodburn in NSW to Bundaberg in Qld, and the northern from Cardwell to Cape York and the Torres Strait. Also occurs in Malaysia, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia

Leaves:

The compound leaves are alternate, pinnate, and entire, without a terminal leaflet. There are 2 to 6 leaflets from 5-15cm long, 25-45mm wide and obovate to oblong-elliptic in shape. The petioles are 2-5cm long and the petiolules are 2-5mm long.

Leaves are glabrous and rather thick, the upper surface glossy dark green the lower surface paler. The compound leaves lack a terminal leaflet.

Flowers:

Cream flowers form loose panicles in the forks of the upper leaves. Flowering period is from March to May or occasionally through to August.

Fruit:

The fruits are brown, pear-shaped capsules, on thick stems opening with 3 valves. The seeds are bright red, oval and about 15mm long. Fruit ripens from December to March or to June.

Bark:

The bark is grey, hard and scaly, fissured with occasional longitudinal cracks.

References:

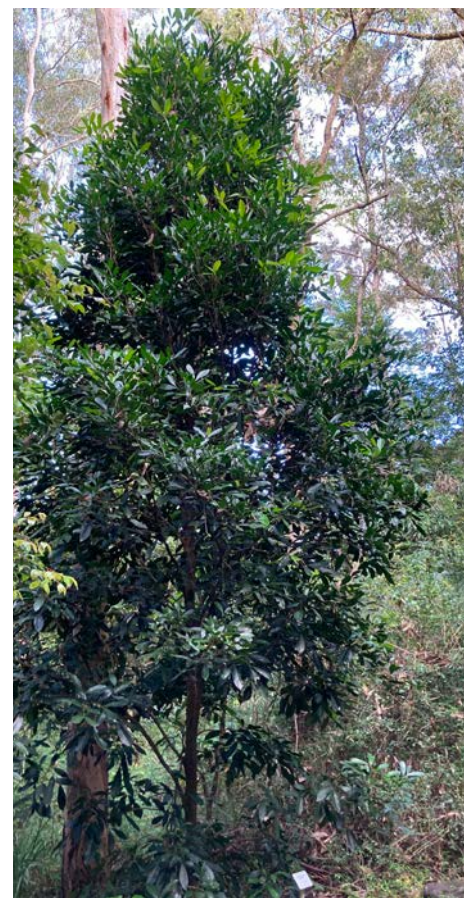
Floyd, A.G. 1990, Australian rainforests in New South Wales (vol2), Surrey Beatty & Sons, Chipping Norton, NSW.

Floyd, A.G. 2008, Rainforest trees of mainland eastern Australia, Terania Rainforest Publishing, Lismore, NSW.

Harden, G., McDonald, B. and Williams, J. 2006, Rainforest trees and shrubs. A field guide to their identification, Gwen Harden Publishing, Nambucca Heads, NSW.

LINK: **PlantNET**

LINK: **Atlas of Living Australia**



Top left: The compound leaves lack a terminal leaflet.

Photo: Peter Woodard

Top right: A specimen tree in the "Wilson's Park" garden at LRBG.

Photo: P. Gould

Middle right: The flowers, one ovule per locule. © CSIRO

Bottom: Bark on a young tree. Photo: P. Gould

DEEP ROOTS, LONG LIFE: GEOFF WALKER CELEBRATES 100 YEARS



Our wonderful Friend of the Gardens, Geoff Walker, celebrated his 100th birthday with friends and family at Caroona in June.

His daughter, Bronwyn, granddaughter Bethany and great-granddaughter June, are pictured planting a tree in honour of the occasion, a wonderful milestone.

Geoff was one of the original group of plant lovers who began the Gardens and worked as a very active volunteer for over thirty years. He served on the Friend's committee for many years, was a whiz in the nursery and had many wonderful visions for the gardens, one of which, Palm Gully, bears his name.

In 2012 Geoff was awarded *Lismore's Citizen of the Year* award on Australia Day. He holds many stories of the history of the Gardens and his enthusiasm for native plants is still certainly infectious.



Top left: Geoff in nature.

Top right: Daughter, Bronwyn, granddaughter, Bethany and great-granddaughter, June, are pictured planting a tree in honour of Geoff's 100th birthday

Bottom: Geoff in the Nursery



Photo: Michelle Garrett

The caterpillar of the Painted Pine Moth/Painted Apple Moth (*Orgyia australis*), family *Lymantriidae* (Tussock moth). Also called the Painted Acacia Moth since it commonly feeds on wattle (*Acacia*).

Key features:

- Four dense creamy-yellow "toothbrush" tufts along the back
- Long dark hair-pencils projecting forward from the head and backward from the tail
- Silvery-white lateral tufts near the front
- Reddish/purplish body colouring between segments
- Common host plants include **wattle** (*Acacia*), **gum** and **grevillea** – all typical of Northern Rivers bushland

This species is native and found right along the eastern Australian coast including northern NSW. The hairs are urticating (can cause skin irritation/urticaria if touched). The female moth is flightless, and young caterpillars disperse by "ballooning" on silk threads in the wind.



The volunteers work mornings are **every Wednesday - Gardeners** start at **8am** and finish at **11am**, **Nursery Group** begins at **9am** and finishes at **12pm**.

Wear long sleeves and pants, hat, gloves and bring your morning tea.



Top left: Susan in her clean shed.

Top right: Native grasses display

Bottom left: "Don's Red Bridge" renovation, opening and naming. Tracey, Don Woodley and his grandson, Odi.



FOR YOUR DIARY - CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2026

DATE	EVENT	WHAT + WHERE	TIMES
Sunday 30th August	Guided Walk	The 400 million Year Walk with Richard	10.00am till 11.00am \$5 adults
Sunday 20th September - Sunday 18th October	(Re)Create Sculpture Exhibition open day, Visitor's Centre - Free entry Open week days 7.30am till 3.30pm and weekends from 9am till 4pm. Closed 5th October		
Sunday 27th September	Riverfest	Lismore until 25th October	
Saturday 21st November	Friends LRBG Annual General Meeting	In the EEC - All welcome	9.30am
Sunday 29th November	Guided Walk	Details to come	10.00am till 11.00am \$5 adults

We welcome private groups and school bookings. For more details please email: publicity@friendslrbg.com.au