

**Taking a (well earned) break for the Holidays! We will be shutting up shop from COB Friday 21 December until Monday 7 January**

**We hope everyone has a great break and ask everyone to travel safe and watch out for native wildlife on the roads during the holidays. See you all in the new year!**

**Visit us on facebook! Search 'Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group Inc.' and 'Like' us to get updates on what is happening over the break**

### Community Nursery back in bloom

The PCL Community Nursery is getting back into gear with the re-opening of the Swayne Street Natural Environment Centre after recent closure due to Myrtle Rust quarantining.

A group of dedicated volunteers have been working hard, sorting, cleaning and sowing seeds and potting up a large number of local native species. Seeds and seedlings are collected locally and will be used in various revegetation and regeneration projects throughout the region as well as giveaways at regional events.

So far the group has sown around 20 seed trays and potted up in the region of 1000 seedlings- having first washed and sterilised the pots!

Without the help of volunteers the work being undertaken in the nursery simply would not be possible.

A special mention must be given to Margaret Lane for running the nursery in the absence of a Project Officer and to Irene Champion for all her help with sorting and cataloguing seeds and lending her expertise and advice.



*Tree being smothered by Cat's Claw Creeper (top)*

*Same tree having been freed by volunteers M. Lane, B. Gillespie and S & D Bowen (middle)*

*Images: C. Bartron*



*D. Bowen and S. Perkins working in the nursery*

*Image: M. Lane*

### Out of the nursery and into the wild

Some of our nursery volunteers got to (translate as generously agreed to) experience some *in situ* conservation work out in the field at Reliance Creek National Park.

Swapping potting mix and seedlings for secateurs and herbicide volunteers and staff took to a small patch of forest usually inaccessible due to high water levels to tackle Cat's Claw Creeper.

The patch had been identified on a previous visit where the flowering Cat's Claw Creeper gave itself away. By getting in and treating the vines now this patch of creeper will not be able to seed this season.

Spending two hours cutting Cat's Claw Creeper away from forest trees and pasting the cut vine with herbicide to kill the roots and tubers, the group made a great impact on the site.

Whilst the visual difference to the lower trunks where the vine had been removed was obvious, the full extent of the effort will not be fully appreciated until the vines currently smothering the trees die and fall off as a result of the treatment.

We greatly look forward to re-visiting this site in the future to see the full effect of the work done. A big thank-you to the group that came out, it was truly a brilliant effort.

### Wanted: Project Officer

Do you have a passion for the natural environment? Do you have a drive to improve land practices to help it? We are seeking a fit and energetic, hard working person who is committed to goals of Landcare and catchment management. Working with a small team the position will lead the management of a range of projects that support those goals in the catchments of the Pioneer River and surrounding coastal streams. Interested? Head to the Landcare QLD website for details; <http://landcare.org.au/position-vacant-project-officer>

## Know your water restrictions

The weather is heating up and it is tempting to increase water usage in the garden to compensate, but it is important that we all do our part to conserve this valuable resource by adhering to and staying up to date with water restrictions. Most of the Mackay Region is currently on Level 1 or 2 water restrictions. To see where you are and to stay up to date go to;

[http://mackay.qld.gov.au/water\\_services/water\\_restrictions](http://mackay.qld.gov.au/water_services/water_restrictions)

## Weed of the month

### *Sphagneticola trilobata*

#### Singapore Daisy

**Description:** a vigorous ground cover forming dense mats

**Leaves:** lush, glossy green leaves, usually three lobed and growing in pairs along the stem

**Flowers and fruit:** orange-yellow 'daisy' flowers to 20mm. Flowers all year round with flowers held above leaves on short stalks.

**Habitat:** highly adaptive it invades all habitat types in our region

**Origin:** tropical Americas

**The problem:** a Class 3 declared Weed Singapore Daisy spreads rapidly and smothers seedling, ferns and shrubs and will out-compete them for survival. Singapore daisy is difficult to control. Spreading by both seed and vegetatively it is capable of growing from small cuttings and is often spread by slashing and mowing operations as well as being transported via water.

**Where in our region:** a garden escapee this plant is now widespread

**What you can do:** hand pulling and digging up runners is suitable for small infestations. Dispose of waste carefully to reduce risk of spread through garden waste. Put waste into a black plastic bag and leave in the sun for a few days before putting into the refuse bin. Repeat hand pulling will need to be done as new regrowth appears.



## Plant of the month

### *Melastoma malabathricum* subsp. *malabathricum*

#### Native Lasiandra

**Description:** attractive native plant that forms a shrub to small tree (1-3m tall)

**Leaves:** roughly textured, dark green with five prominent longitudinal veins. Oval in shape 100mm long and 40mm wide, opposite arrangement

**Flowers and fruit:** medium (to 50mm) pink-mauve, open five-petaled flowers with prominent yellow anthers. Flowers are 'buzz-pollinated', with the vibrations from bees wings needed to move pollen into the female parts of the flower. Flowers from November to January with purple-red berries (10mm) forming from December. Fruit are sweet and edible but leave the mouth and tongue stained black.

**Habitat:** found in rain forest, monsoon forest or wet areas in open forest and heath, also grows along roads or in disturbed areas

**Origin:** found across northern Australia and into NSW

**Propagation:** can be grown from seed or cutting, prefers ample year round moisture in a well drained, semi-shaded position. This plant is usually available from Australian native specialist plant nurseries and is worth looking for.

**Currently in flower and starting to fruit in the Heritage Garden at the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens!**

Sources: Weeds Australia website, Weeds of National Significance website, SGAP Townsville website, Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens website

## Handy tips for everyone!

Recycle your old batteries! Battery World, 149 Victoria Street, Mackay, will take all used batteries from watch batteries, to AAAA and even car batteries, for recycling. This service is provided free of charge for private citizen and for a small fee to businesses.

Do you want stop using plastic bags from the supermarket but still like to have plastic bags for your kitchen rubbish bin? Well, here is an affordable, environmentally friendly solution: take your own reusable bags to the supermarket and purchase fully biodegradable plastic bags, just the right size, from North Queensland Chemical and Paints, 6-8 industrial Street Mackay. Its not expensive so give it a try!

## The great Australian Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)



With breeding occurring in spring and summer those in the Mackay region have been seeing an increase in the occurrence of adult Koalas. Predominantly nocturnal Koalas typically sleep during the day, but with breeding season they may become more active during the early evening and morning.

Adults have home ranges which vary depending on food abundance. Solitary animals, they are not particularly territorial and home ranges overlap. During breeding season they may become more defensive of other Koalas and males have a dominance hierarchy, bellowing and flighting to maintain their position.

The courting period is short, and males and females do not share parenting duties, the female being the sole carer.

A reduction in habitat and food trees coupled with breeding activity can result in increased movement through areas populated by humans which increases risk of dog attack and road strike. Adults have no natural predators.

Adults eat around 400g of eucalypt leaf and shoots a day, which requires much amount of foraging. Koalas spend a large amount of their nocturnal foraging time on the ground, moving between feeding trees.



Image: C Bartron

### Poo-‘Bear’

**Like other marsupials Koala joeys are born and climb into the mothers pouch after a short gestation period (35 days). They are suckled by the female until they start to wean at around 5-6 months. Weaning involves a transition diet from milk to leaf through eating ‘pap’, a soft faeces produced by the mother. Highly nutritious and believed to introduce micro-organisms into the joey’s digestive system needed for the digestion of leaf.**

Koalas get the vast majority of their water intake from their food, rarely drinking. They target young leaves and shoots which have the highest water and nutrient content, are the most palatable and easiest to chew and digest. Food is masticated to a fine paste with strong jaws and sharp teeth.

Food may be retained in the digestive system for as long as 250 hours in the fermentation process of digestion. Most toxic substances in the leaf are inactivated in the liver. Their low energy diet and low metabolism are considered to be the reasons for their spending 18 hours a day sleeping.

### Koala Fast Facts

*Males may be as much as 50% heavier than females*

*Females breed from age 2-12yrs and have back-facing pouches like wombats*

*The QLD variety is smaller with paler with less dense fur than their southern counterparts which are adapted to cooler climates.*

*Koalas are susceptible to Chlamydia resulting in female infertility*

If you see a Koala please simply observe it and leave it alone. If it appears injured call the **Australian Wildlife Rescue Service on 0447 543 268**

## Capping off a year of Coastal Community Activities

The final Coastal Community Activities of 2012 were held Saturday 1 December at Bucasia and Holiday Bay. Over 30 dedicated volunteers celebrated the first day of summer at the Activities. Volunteers planted over 600 trees to improve the condition of coastal dunes. Following the activities volunteers were treated to free BBQs, plants, Coastcare hats and t-shirts, and reusable cups to thank them for their support and contribution to the Coasts and Communities program throughout 2012.

Coastal Community Activities have been widely supported by local residents throughout the year, with 96 volunteers contributing over 400 hours of time looking after our local beaches.

Saturday also launched Coastcare week, which runs from 1-8 December. Coastcare is an Australia-wide community of volunteers who care for their coast. A major element of the Coasts and Communities program is to work with coastal communities to identify local environmental problems and achieve practical solutions.



The work of Coastcare volunteers complements the full suite of on-ground activities that are occurring across **Mackay Regional Council’s 23 coastal residential communities** from Midge Point in the north, to Armstrongs Beach in the South.

**Coasts and Communities 2012 snapshot:**  
**3,343** native species planted to improve the condition of coastal dunes to stabilise our coastal dune system and provide habitat for native animals  
**180** hectares of coastal environments cleared of invasive weeds to promote native rehabilitation  
**27** truck loads of rubbish and marine debris removed from our beaches and coastal reserves  
**1,658** metres of coastal fencing installed to protect dune rehabilitation areas and define dune rehabilitation areas and define pedestrian access tracks to protect nationally threatened beach scrub communities  
**144** beach access tracks maintained to ensure public access to the beach for all

**Coastcare events will begin again in February 2013, to volunteer or get e-mail updates contact [kerri.woodcock@reefcatchments.com.au](mailto:kerri.woodcock@reefcatchments.com.au) or call 4968 4207**

*Coasts and Communities is a joint initiative of Mackay Regional Council and Reef Catchments with support from Mackay Regional Council’s Natural Environment Levy and the Australian Government’s Caring for Our Country initiative.*

## Who's who in Pioneer Catchment & Landcare

### Management Committee

**Chair** Margaret Lane (SGAP—Mackay Branch)

**Deputy Chair** Dave Hunter

**Treasurer** Dianne Williams

**Secretary (Non voting)** Wendy Eiteneuer

### Committee Members

Irene Champion

Di Salau

Cr Theresa Morgan

John Atkinson

### Pioneer Catchment office

4944 1979

[www.pioneercatchment.org.au](http://www.pioneercatchment.org.au)

### Pioneer Catchment Landcare Facilitator

Claire Bartron

0419 778 402

[claire.bartron@reefcatchments.com.au](mailto:claire.bartron@reefcatchments.com.au)

**Project Officer** Currently Vacant

**Office Manager** Wendy Eiteneuer

0427 543 509

[admin@pioneercatchment.org.au](mailto:admin@pioneercatchment.org.au)

Supported by:



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY



## Upcoming Events

### DECEMBER

**Saturday 15 December, 5.30-8.30pm**—Christmas in the Gardens! Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens, Tropical Sun Garden adjacent to Café. Fun, family friendly evening of entertainment. Contact Maya Harris 4952 7300, [botanic@mackay.qld.gov.au](mailto:botanic@mackay.qld.gov.au)

### School activities at the Botanic Gardens

**All activities: 10.00am – 12.00 midday, at the meeting room of the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens, \$5 per child, bookings to [botanic@mackay.qld.gov.au](mailto:botanic@mackay.qld.gov.au), 4952 7300**

**Tuesday 18 – Thursday 20 December**- Jingle bells tinkling in the Gardens

Bookings required by Friday 14 December

**Tuesday 8 – Thursday 10 January**- Make a 'B' line for the gardens...

Bookings required by Friday 14 December

**Tuesday 15 – Thursday 17 January**: Spinners and weavers

Bookings required by Friday 4 January

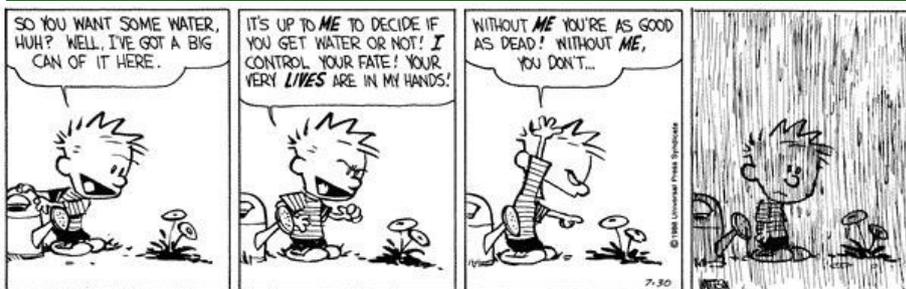
**Tuesday 22 – Thursday 24 January**: Turn over a new leaf

Bookings required by Friday 11 January

**Check our website for more events and updates!**

### Land for Wildlife Plant Orders

Thanks to everyone who has sent in their plant orders. However, we have had a few 'mystery' forms sent in with no names on them (this is a fault of how the forms were set-up). If you have sent in an order by mail please contact Claire Bartron on 0419 778 402 to confirm your order



## Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News

December 2012

POSTAGE PAID AUSTRALIA

If unable to be delivered please return to

Pioneer Catchment & Landcare

Group Inc.

PO Box 1076

MACKAY Qld 4740