

### Nature Conservation in Action: Hilltop Haven

Article/photo: M Godley



Maxine Godley is the owner of 'Hilltop Haven', a property located 20km northwest of Mackay not far from the coast. The property is a dedicated wildlife sanctuary under [Wildlife Land Trust](#) and registered with the [Land for Wildlife](#) program since 2011.

The sanctuary covers approx 2ha of high value regrowth *Eucalyptus tereticornis*, *Corymbia tessellaris*, *Livistona decipiens* open forest on low hills (endangered RE 8.12.27a). *Carallia bractiata* brings the 4 o'clock moth and the rare *Omphalea celata* is being planted to attract the zodiac moth.

Wildlife known to occur on the sanctuary includes agile wallabies (*Macropus agilis*), northern brown bandicoots (*Isodon macrourus*), brush turkeys (*Alectura lathami*) and short-beaked echidnas (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*), as well as a variety of amphibians, reptiles, mammals, insects, and other invertebrates. Formerly plentiful birdlife has become significantly less abundant on the sanctuary, which is of great concern to Maxine.

The visiting wallabies provide particular joy as they bring their joeys and come close to the house for water, grass and native figs. Snakes are also very welcome regular visitors.

Maxine is actively enhancing the property's habitat opportunities through the installation of customised bird and micro-bat breeding boxes. Maxine reports:

- I just cleared an eastern embankment of Guinea Grass and planted *Lomandra* spp., Rusty Pittosporum (*P. ferrugineum*) and native mulberries (*Pipturus argenteus*) - all are flourishing.
- Removed a ground-cover creeper from a large western embankment that had potential to get into the bush. I will be planting *Lomandra* and *Dianella* into that area.
- Waiting for rain to plant *Lomandra* spp, Rusty Pittosporum and some *Euodia elleryana* I collected from seed, into the driveway embankment to help to secure it against wash-aways.
- My Creek Cherries (*Syzygium australe*) are rocketing on, the Native Gingers (*Alpinia* sp.) are slow, the Paroo Lilies (*Dianella caerulea*) are doing well and I have planted 2 rare *Omphalea celata* (it also hosts "The Bungee Jumping Caterpillars" - featured in that delightful children's book produced locally and available from the Mackay Region Botanical Gardens shop).



### Nursery News...

Article/photo: M Lane

Nursery activities started again at the Mackay Natural Environment Centre on January 7<sup>th</sup>. We have had some losses in the extreme heat and dry but mainly plants are well and growing like mad. Now is the critical time for growth so that plants can be ready to plant out as soon as conditions are right. At present we have more than 5000 plants in the nursery, with some ready to go into the ground now and many that will be ready in a month or two.

Main nursery activities in January/February will be potting up from seed trays into tubes, sowing seeds, and the usual maintenance jobs such as weeding and pot washing.

Many of the plants we are growing are for coastal projects, PCL's Far Beach project and Council's coastal sites. Species include Coastal She-oak (*Casuarina equisetifolia*), Cotton Tree (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) and trailing plant Goats Foot Convolvulus (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*) which are suitable for the foredunes and beaches. *Acacia leptocarpa* and *Macaranga tanarius* are being grown for the hind dunes, where there is some shelter from the impact the salt winds.

We have two *Melaleuca* species to plant on river banks and watercourses: Weeping Paperbark (*M. leucadendra*) and Blue-leaved Paperbark (*M. dealbata*). Seeds of another river bank species, Damson (*Terminalia sericocarpa*), featured in the November newsletter, are germinating now.





## Plant of the month

## *Commersonia bartramia*

### Brown Kurrajong

Speaking of revegetation, the Brown Kurrajong is amongst the best as a fast growing, hardy and attractive pioneer for rainforest margins and creek lines. You will see it flowering during the summer months (also known as Christmas Kurrajong). There is one in the shade gardens at the Mackay Region Botanical Gardens.

**Habit:** A spreading tree with medium horizontally layered branches. Bark is rough grey on the lower trunk becoming smoother above.

**Leaves:** Simple, alternate with toothed margins, broadly ovate, mostly 6-14cm long, dark green above, silvery grey beneath and covered with fine hairs.

**Flower/fruit:** Numerous tiny, five petalled, cream flowers are borne in sprays along the top of the branches giving the trees a snow laden effect. The grey-brown globular fruits, about 2cm in diameter and densely clothed in soft bristles are five valved capsules with one or two black seeds in each valve.

**Propagation:** When one or two capsules are observed to be opening, collect capsules and place into a calico bag. The capsules will continue to open; collect seeds and hot water treat before sowing.

Source: . Alcock & Champion 1989 *One Hundred and One Trees of Mackay*.  
Melzer & Plumb 2007 *Plants of Capricornia*.



Habit. S.Haslam



Fruit. S Robins

## Weed spotting this month

## *Megathyrsus maximus var maximus*

### Guinea Grass

Guinea Grass is one of the earliest African Grasses to be introduced into northern Australia for cattle forage. It thrives in wet climates, grows best on well-drained soils and can colonise low lying areas and creek-lines. It is on just about every disturbed site, track, road and creek bank in our area.

It not only dominates the understorey where conditions are suitable, but its productive biomass promotes intense fires that can kill canopy trees. Dense growth can encourage fungal occurrence with higher levels of humidity. Some eucalypt species are susceptible to fungal root rot. Guinea Grass does provide habitat for rodents, bandicoots and some small birds, however it is not a native and native grasses give better habitat and supply more seeds.

It can form quite large clumps and grow to 1.5-2m tall. The leaf blades are long, narrow and finely tipped. They have a prominent mid-rib and are approximately 1 cm wide. Seed heads are large (up to 40 cm long) and are well-spread, with a large number of fine branches. Seeds are oblong in shape and are often purple in colour. Under the right conditions Guinea Grass can flower all year round.



Image: QDAFF

Guinea Grass will present an ongoing battle in revegetation projects. Control measures will depend on your site but the best advice is work on a patch at a time. Brushcut the tall clumps down and follow up spray the stumps with Glyphosate. Dig out isolated plants with a mattock or similar tool. Get some shading pioneer species established as soon as practical, and work on stopping seed set of regrowth. Keep the regrowth down until the trees are at least 5m high.

For specific herbicide rates see:

[http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/67398/IPA-Guinea-Grass-PP82.pdf](http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/67398/IPA-Guinea-Grass-PP82.pdf)

Source: 2011, *Weeds of Mackay Whitsunday Region*



Guinea grass on a creek bank reveg site. Image: K.Steel

## Getting ready for Revegetation Work

It's that time of our seasonal year again. Even though there has not been the rain we could expect this time of year there is opportunity for some late summer revegetation work. There are a range of techniques to re-establish healthy bushland, from direct seeding to facilitated natural regeneration. However, the following is a summary of how to get your land ready for successful **native revegetation through planting tubestock**:

**Planning** — Have a plan and work strategically across your property at a pace you can handle. Your plan should make explicit why, when, where and how you will do the work. What tools and resources do you need, and who can help you? Cost out and gather Tree Guards, Stakes, Mulch enough for your plants.

**Site Preparation** — Ripping may help on compacted sites and should be to about 0.5 m or deeper. It should be done in summer to give maximum shattering effect. Ripping will increase soil aeration, and this increases plant growth.

Weed control is critical for successful plant establishment and pre-planting weed control is the cheapest and most effective form. The main methods include scalping, cultivation and herbicide application. Guinea Grass is a headache for many people this time of year. Depending on your site, it needs to be knocked down and possibly sprayed out prior to planting. Dead grass is a good mulch and dead roots will hold a steep site together. It may take a couple of seasons for other woody weeds like lantana, leucaena or sickle pod well under control before planting.

Stock exclusion is essential. Electric fencing is a good alternative to conventional fencing on many revegetation sites; it is cheaper and is more flexible in following natural land curves.

**Soil preparation**— the main point is look for soil moisture, plant after rain and water in each plant with at least 5 litres at planting. We really recommend using Water Crystals mixed with a native plant fertiliser to help establish plants.

**Plant selection and placement** — Pioneer Catchment & Landcare offers information on local species lists suitable for a range of sites—riparian, hillside, open paddock, understory, wetlands, dunes. See our webpage for a range of native plant information sheets. Identifying nearby remnant vegetation can help determine suitable species for revegetation. In open areas, give preference to pioneering species. Consult your Property Management Plan if you have one.

## Landcare activities in late 2013...



Our remote monitoring camera captured the progress of construction of an Engineered Log Jam on Owen's Ck, including a minor flood event in November



Below - Landcare Volunteer, Margie, helps out with spreading grass seed on the Log Jam site, in anticipation of rain



Below — Landcare Volunteer, Jessica, helps out with Far Beach revegetation work, and Below Left— Jess Scobles from CVA with Carolyn Thompson from GBRMPA showing some Coastal Christmas cheer after tree planting in the rain at Far Beach.



## Upcoming Events

### February

- Saturday 1** — Morag McNichol Reserve Working Bee. Contact 4955 0153
- Sunday 2** — World Wetlands Day
- Sunday 2**— Birdlife Mackay outing to Mt. Charlton and Cameron's Pocket. Contact 49593382
- Tuesday 25** — Business' Clean-Up day
- Wednesday 28**— Schools' Clean-Up day

### March

- Sunday 2** — Clean Up Australia Day
- Sunday 2**—Birdlife Mackay outing to Orphanage Swamp Bucasia. Contact 49593382
- Thursday 6** - SGAP meeting, Ken Gillman—the *Aristolochia* Story
- Saturday 8** — Morag McNichol Reserve Working Bee. Contact 4955 0153
- Saturday 29** — Earth Hour 8:30-9:30pm

Biodiversity is the variety of life - the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems of which they form a part.

Where all the components are able to interact and function, a healthy environment - from the soil below, to the land and water and air above - can be achieved..

**Biodiversity**  
WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER



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Congratulations to Margaret Lane, presented the **Environmental Achievement Award** at the Mackay Regional Council Australia Day Awards 2014.

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