

Mackay Natural Environment Centre Delivers.

The Midge Point Progress Association were recipients of one of the initial batch of plants produced by the Mackay Natural Environment Centre this season. Plants produced included Casuarina, Acacia, a variety of native coastal shrubs and coastal ground covers such as Birds Beak Grass, Spinifex and Beach Bean, totalling 500 plants. Delivery of the plants occurred in January, planting has since been undertaken by the Midge Point Progress Association. The Midge Point area has suffered erosion due to cyclones and so the planting is aimed at providing fore-dune stability. This delivery was made possible through collaboration during propagation by PCL nursery volunteers, a local disability group, Council staff, Council volunteers and the Green Army, under the supervision of Mackay Regional Council Nursery Supervisor Sue McCormack. Landcare staff members from Sarina and Pioneer Catchment were able to view the plantings at Midge Point during a trip in February to the area. The Mackay Natural Environment Centre has also delivered plants to the community in Seaforth and McEwens Beach in January, signifying a successful start to the 2015 planting season.

An official opening of the Centre by the Mayor will be held on Thursday March 8.

Project Update - Action on The Ground, Healthy Soils.

Gas sampling from ten chambers in-situ on a cane farm situated in the North Eaton area has commenced during February. Chambers are located on a paddock that was harvested in 2014 and then fallowed in early 2015. Five of the chambers are situated on an area that has this year been cultivated with soybean, with the remaining five chambers located on uncultivated ground. Gas testing is focusing on assessment of the nitrogen emissions from the soil. PCL officers are responsible for gas testing on a weekly basis. The gas samples are dispatched by Farmacist and result interpreted and reported to Reef Catchment.



Image : L. Mathewson Feb 2015

Central Queensland Coast Landcare Network (CQCLN)

The first 2015 CQCLN meeting was held on February 5 at Midge Point. Landcare staff members from Sarina, Pioneer and Whitsunday attended. Discussion focussed on progress of the current QLD government funded "Everyones Environment Grant" (EEG) projects along with potential future projects in the next round of funding.

We Need You!

If you have some spare time and some basic computer skills using excel we could use your help.



Several tasks exists in the PCL office and in the field that require an enthusiastic volunteer. Please contact the office if you can help out for a few hours.

Wheel-of-fire

Family: Proteaceae

Stenocarpus sinuatus is a colourful flowering tree of the rainforest often used in ornamental situations. It can be seen as a street tree, in parks and at the MRBG and was the floral emblem of the former Mirani Shire Council. It has also been widely grown as a street tree or used as an indoor plant in many other countries. It occurs in NE NSW and Eastern QLD, and also in Papua New Guinea and is fairly common in higher altitude rainforests in this region, including Eungella and Mt Blackwood. The timber is very attractive and suitable for cabinet work, but is vulnerable to borers. Trees in cultivation usually remain much smaller than in the rainforest. First flowering can be within 3 years but may take longer.

Leaves: Alternative, simple, entire to deeply lobed, 120-200mm in length. Upper surface of blade glossy dark green, paler below.

Flowers: Very showy, bright orange to red produced in umbels of 12-15 flowers, borne along the stems or in the leaf-axils. Fallen flowers may be seen on the ground under



Image: L. Mathewson

the tree. Flowers January—March.

Fruit/Seeds: Fruits are a dark grey-brown hairy follicle, 5-100mm long and up to 20mm wide, somewhat boat shaped, They contain a number of overlapping, winged seeds. Ripe April to September.

The wheel of fire is a food source for a large range of nectar feeding birds.

Source: Fruits of the Australian Tropical Rainforest, Cooper & Copper 2004.

This plant is currently available at Mackay Natural Environment Centre

Weed Spotting*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis***Light Blue Snakeweed, Jamaica Snakeweed**

Family: Verbenaceae

Originally introduced as a garden ornamental this species is now widespread and common throughout this region. Its presence usually indicates past disturbance; it spreads rapidly by seeds and is indicative of overgrazing. Although it is not declared in Queensland, it is highly recommended this weed be controlled to minimise agricultural and environmental damage. It is a clumping perennial woody-based herb or sub-shrub to around 1m. Stems 4-angled and generally purplish. Leaves are opposite or sometimes alternate, simple, oval or lance-shaped, thick leathery often bluish grey, 20-80mm long; margins toothed. Flowers are tubular 5-lobed, blue to violet or purple, about 8mm diameter, borne in groups along stout snake-like terminal spikes up to 400 x 5mm. Seeds are dry, enclosed in floral remnants, 3-7 x 2mm purple, brown or black and splitting at maturity into two, 1-seeded segments. This weed is spread by seeds in contaminated soil, pasture seed and fodder. It is capable of taking hold on any soil type.



Source: Weeds of the Mackay Whitsunday Region, MRPMG, 2013, available from PCL office or Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens.

Land for Wildlife Interest



Keith and Lindy Burton have a property in the Dows Creek region that has some impressive retained habitat that includes Cycads and Grass Trees. They are interested in preserving and increasing the Native Flora on their property and encouraging Native Wildlife to inhabit the property. To date they have been working towards removing lantana and Guinea Grass. A site inspection was conducted in February and a Land Management Plan is being devised to assist them in their goals



Images: L. Mathewson

The Importance of Soil

"Food quality is central to human health and well-being.

Soil health determines food quality, land and water resources, and social and environmental welfare. This includes food security, the need for fibre for fuel, clothes and housing, renewable energy sources, clean water, pure air, biodiversity and environmental quality. These factors all depend on soil health. They also determine a nation's long term economic viability and its competitiveness in world markets.

Australian soils are ancient and fragile. The plants, animals and micro-organisms that have maintained them for millennia in the past are stressed mainly through the introduction of European plants, animals and farming techniques. Symptoms of these stressors include areas of erosion, compaction, acidification, rising salinity and most importantly, loss of organic matter and vital nutrients.

Despite these problems, the productivity on Australian farms has continued to improve mainly through the use of chemical fertilizers and irrigation. Both these practices are expensive and unsustainable, especially for broad acre farming, and particularly in the context of a changing climate and water scarcity. A renewed focus on soil health will not only improve the nutritional quality of food, it will also:

- Increase agricultural productivity without high input costs,
- Extend the growing period and boost water holding capacity,
- Improve downstream water quality,
- boost soil fertility, and
- enhance eco-system services such as clean water and air."



Source: Healthy Soils Australia Website <http://www.healthysoils.com.au/>

Farewell Dale Arvidsson.

Dale is leaving his position as Curator of the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens after 11 years in the role. During this time Dale has worked with PCL members who are Friends of the Gardens , SGAP members and volunteers. Commencing on March 3 Dale will be moving into the role of Curator of both Mt Cootha and historic City Botanical Gardens for Brisbane City Council. PCL wishes Dale all the best in his new role. Over the past 11 years Dale has made an invaluable contribution to the Mackay region and he will be greatly missed.

Reef Catchments Plant Request

Reef Catchments is currently asking for assistance from landholders and "plant-interested" people to obtain wetlands species for their System Repair sites. They are interested in trialing transplanting the species and growing in private dams. If you are a landowner that has an area you feel may be suitable to assist with the trial or if you have any of the species listed below and you are willing to assist please contact Ioan Flett at Reef Catchments. *Baumea articulata* (1-2m), *Eleocharis dulcis* (1-1.5m), *Eleocharis sphacelata* (0.5-2m), *Fimbristylis littoralis* (<1m), *Ischaemum australe* (1.5m), *Ischaemum rugosum* (1.2m), *Isolepis inundata* (<0.3m), *Leersia hexandra* (2m), *Lepironia articulata* (0.2-2.3m), *Schoenoplectus littoralis* (0.6-1.6m), *Schoenoplectus mucronatus* (0.3-1m).

Additionally, if you have spotted any of the species in accessible public places please contact Reef Catchments

Pioneer Catchment Office contacts

Ph: 07 4944 1979 www.pioneercatchment.org.au

Office Manager: Wendy Eiteneuer 0447 749 769
admin@pioneercatchment.org.au

Project Officers: Carla Lambropoulos 0497 441 979
projectofficer@pioneercatchment.org.au

Lara Mathewson 0407 634 322
lara.mathewson@pioneercatchment.org.au

March

Saturday 7, 21 Working Bee Friends of MacKillop Wetlands 6am.

Saturday 7, Morag Mc Nichol Reserve Working Bee 6am.

Saturday 21, World Forestry Day

<http://www.un.org/en/events/forestsday/>

Sunday 22, World Water Day

<http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/>

Monday 23, World Meteorology Day

<http://www.wmo.int/worldmetday/>

Tuesday 24 Business Clean up Day

<http://www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/>

Wednesday 25 Friends of Morag McNichol Reserve meeting 4:30pm

Friday 27 Schools Clean up Day

Saturday 28, Earth Hour

<https://earthhour.org.au/home/default.aspx>

April

Sunday 5, Birdlife Mackay outing, Berri Werri Gargett

Saturday 11, Morag Mc Nichol Reserve Working Bee 6am

Wednesday 22, Friends of Morag McNichol Reserve meeting 4:30pm

Wednesday 22, International Mother Earth Day

<http://www.un.org/en/events/motherearthday/>

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