



Pioneer Catchment & Landcare News

May 2017



BBQ Festivities

To celebrate National Volunteer Week PCL staff are hosting a BBQ lunch at the MNEC at 12pm Tuesday, May 9. PCL members, volunteers and friends are invited to share food and laughs while we reflect on yet another successful year of volunteerism within PCL. We would be lost without our volunteers! Please celebrate with us!

RSVP for catering purposes to:
admin@pioneercatchment.org.au or
4944 1979 by Friday, May 5th.

Giant Rat's Tail (GRT)

Recent site visits and conversations with landholders have revealed the growing troubles that Giant Rat's Tail (*Sporobolus pyramidalis*) and other *sporobolus* spp. are causing in paddocks in Mackay surrounds. It is important to act fast as these weeds in particular are aggressive grasses with the power to significantly alter natural areas. GRT grows between 0.6-1.7m tall with a seed head up to 45cm long. Main seeding is from late summer to autumn and can produce up to 85,000 seeds per square metre in a year! Viability of seeds are upwards of ten years. Slashing GRT after flowering is not advisable as seeds are spread this way. It is recommended where possible to cut and bag the seed heads so these seeds do not germinate. GRT is spread by machinery and animals (both domestic and native). It is advisable to limit movement through GRT especially when grass is wet. **Ongoing monitoring and control is crucial.** For information on best management practices specific to your land type, refer to Biosecurity Queensland's [Rat's Tail Grasses Fact Sheet](#).

Marian Soil Health Field Day

The fourth annual Central Queensland Soil Health Systems (CQSHS) Marian Soil Health Field Day was held on Thursday April 6 at Souths Leagues Club followed by a soil assessment workshop the next day. The CQSHS group pulled together a handful of high quality presenters including Professor Susanne Schmidt from the University of Queensland, researchers Matthew Redding and Shelby Berg, and Soil Microbiologist Walter Jehne who shared their research on topics including nutrient management, soil microbiology and water runoff reduction. Simon Mattsson of CQSHS shared his experiences and recent tour to the UK and the innovative practices that he encountered overseas. Agricultural Ecologist David Hardwick returned as the event facilitator and also led the soil assessment workshop where participants looked at soil samples and learned the role that biology plays in the life of plants. The work of the CQSHS committee ensured that the forty eight attendees provided positive feedback on their experience at the field day.

Thank you

Thank you to Di Salau and Marie Burston for donating a large collection of books to the PCL library.

Did You Know?

Recycling Electronic Waste Made Easy

Do not send your electronic waste to landfill, instead drop it off at Mackay E-Hub, who transforms used IT equipment into 3D printers. Community members can bring their used photocopiers, computers, printers and flatscreen tv's for repurposing. Did you know that Mackay E-Hub recycles 95% of items collected?

Mackay E-Hub is located at the Mackay Innovation Centre at 36 Wellington St. Staffed hours for drop-off are 9-12pm Monday to Wednesday but people are encourage to ring E-Hub on 0403 927 967 to confirm drop off times.

Funding Received for Reliance Creek

PCL has secured funds from Reef Catchments as part of the National Landcare Programme for additional weed treatment and mapping at Reliance Creek. On-ground works will see the return of PCL volunteers for weed control at the existing revegetation site, as well as Cat's Claw Creeper surveying and weed control within a 34 hectare patch of woodland on private land, which adjoin the Reliance Creek National Park. Funding for this project is aimed at protecting Matters of National Significance (MNES) values represented within this section of land. Weeding on site will commence on Tuesday, May 9.

Plant of the Month

Elaeocarpus grandis

Blue Quandong

Family: **Elaeocarpaceae**

A large riparian rainforest tree with a distinctive strongly buttressed trunk and slightly wrinkled, grey bark with small fissures. The crown is quite open, forming a sparse canopy, often with a few bright red leaves amongst the green. The bright blue fruit is attractive to many species of birds and animals including Bush Rats.

Leaves: Simple, alternate, oblong-elliptic, 70-180mm long with finely toothed margins; dark glossy green above and paler below with numerous, prominent pit-like *domatia*, which are little chambers that the plant produces to house anthropoids. Old leaves turn bright red before falling.

Flower: Sprays of greenish white, small bell shaped, with fringed petals and no scent. October to March.

Fruit: Thinly fleshed bright blue globular fruits, 18-30mm in diameter, containing one large deeply pitted stone (any month). The flesh is edible and the stones are sometimes used to make jewellery.

Distribution: Coastal areas from northeast NSW to northeast QLD. Often found beside rivers.

Source: Melzer & Plumb. 2007, Plants of Capricornia. The Mackay Branch Society for Growing Australian Plants. 1989, One Hundred and One Trees of Mackay.

Image: S & A Pearson



Weed Spotting

Syngonium podophyllum

Goose foot, Syngonium

Family: **Araceae**

This garden escapee is a vigorous fleshy climber climbing by adventitious roots or spreading over the ground; capable of completely enveloping tree trunks and overtopping trees to form large colonies. It has milky-watery sap that causes permanent blood-like stains on clothing. Originally from Panama and Mexico.

Leaves: Alternate with channelled, stem-sheathing stalks, 150-600mm; 3-lobed arrow-shaped with white central area on young plants; becoming dark green on mature plants, more-or-less orbicular in outline to about 350mm across and deeply divided up to 11 unequal leaflets.

Flower: Numerous minute green, white or cream on a long swollen fleshy spike sheathed by a creamy white, cream or yellow spathe, 90-110mm long, borne in axillary groups.

Fruit: Red to reddish-orange fleshy tightly clustered berries on a central spike, 30-70 x 15-35mm; seeds numerous, black or brown, 5-11mm long, enclosed in a white, cream or greyish pulp.

Distribution: Invades rainforests, melaleuca forests, and creek banks; will take root wherever roots touch the ground or bark.

Source: MRPMG, 2013. Weeds of the Mackay Whitsunday Region.

Image: M Spalding



Field Trip Details Announced

Land for Wildlife participants and other interested individuals are invited to attend this exciting field trip scheduled for Wednesday 31 May. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet fellow Land for Wildlife participants on a field trip themed to revegetation and restoration of a once-degraded site. It is understandable and easy to feel overwhelmed when one is battling large weed infestations or heavily degraded landscapes but to persevere despite this, and to eventually rehabilitate the land to promote native flora and fauna is the ultimate achievement.



The field trip will include a guided tour of a revegetation site in Sarina that has been converted from a previous waste disposal site. Immediately following this participants will head to a fellow Land for Wildlife property to see the habitat and learn of the challenges and solutions of their rehabilitation program. Please mark this date in your calendar as it is a time to discuss challenges that some if not all participants endure.

Please RSVP by Wednesday May 24 to coordinator@sarinalandcare.org.au.

Time: 9:30am -12:30pm

When: Wednesday, May 31st

Where: If you live in Mackay area please meet at Mackay Tourist Information Centre at 9:15am for the bus, or alternatively, meet at SLCMA office 101 Sarina Beach Road, Sarina at 10am for the bus.



Understorey Vegetation

Natural ecosystems with a healthy understorey will have a mixture of small trees, shrubs, grasses, herbs, mosses and lichens. This important layer serves as habitat and food for many small mammals, insects, birds and frogs. Adequate groundcover also reduces the ecosystem's vulnerability to erosion, declines in water quality, and soil health. Dense understorey will also act as a thermal insulator and protect soils from extremes of heat and cold.

Versus....

Clearing or thinning of larger trees changes the micro-climate in the understorey, increases light availability and favours opportunistic weed species. Adverse effects of "tidying-up" of the understorey, inappropriate fire regimes, or grazing by cattle so as to prevent natural regeneration from occurring, include: increasing imbalance between predators and prey as species no longer have the food sources or habitat present, reduced soil fertility, increased risk of erosion, and reduced water quality from rapid-runoff.

Tip: for understorey areas on your property, observe the wildlife and identify what threats may exist. Restrict stock access and remove weeds in stages.

Sourced from Land for Wildlife Queensland Notes "The Value of Understorey Vegetation"

The Pioneer River Bank at Marian

Recent rain and the rise in flood water due to Cyclone Debbie has led to significant erosion and cleared sections along the riverbank but time will tell which trees have survived the inundation of debris. The Marian Community Working Group, who has been involved with revegetation and maintenance of the site behind Melba House, continue to monitor the weed regrowth and native trees from previous plantings and will continue to monitor the site through the dry season.

On a recent drive to Melba House, project officer Melissa and PCL member and volunteer Margaret Lane visited the site and were warmly welcomed by Brodie & Paris West, owners of Vintage Kiss coffee caravan. They were thrilled to share their excitement at being based adjacent to Melba House, which is frequently visited by community members who can stroll along the Prime Minister's Walk and stop at Vintage Kiss for a delicious coffee with river views from tables seated under the shade. Brodie and Paris see the high value of recreational places such as the Pioneer River bank and even assist in weed control whenever they can with a whipper snipper. Anyone wishing to become involved with the Marian Community Working Group or in upcoming working bees can contact PCL for further information. And if you have yet to stop by Vintage Kiss on your drive through Marian, do so, because you are definitely missing out.

Upcoming Events

May

Sunday 7 - Volunteer Expo 10am-2pm

Come and explore local volunteering opportunities; Mackay Senior Citizens Centre from 10am.

Monday 8-14 - National Volunteer Week

Tuesday 9 - PCL Volunteer Appreciation BBQ at MNEC Nursery from 12pm

Friday 19 & 20 - Ag Trade Life

Exhibition showcasing the diversity of agriculture

Sunday 21 - Farleigh Palm Fete hosted by Farleigh State School on Chidlow Street, Farleigh. Native Plants QLD-SGAP Plant Sale.

Wednesday 31 - Land for Wildlife Field Trip 9:30am-12:30pm; RSVP to coordinator@sarinalandcare.org.au

June

Thursday 1 - Native Plants QLD-SGAP General Meeting, MRBG meeting from from 7:30pm; *Show & Tell* and raffle

Saturday 3 - Botanic Gardens Open Day + QLD Day; visit the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens for a fun-filled day starting from 9am.

Sunday 4 - Birdlife Mackay Outing at DeMoleyn's Lagoon; meet at tourist info centre at 6:30am. ph: 4959 3382

Friday 9 - PCL General Meeting

Sunday 18 - Pioneer Valley Show

Tuesday 20 - 22 - Mackay Show

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

PCL General Meeting

PCL members, volunteers and friends are invited to attend the next general meeting which will be held at Paget Materials Recovery Facility at 9am on Friday, June 9th.

Please RSVP to admin@pioneercatchment.org.au.

Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group Inc. Management Committee

Executive

Chair | Dave Hunter
Deputy Chair | Dianne Williams
Treasurer | Mark Radke

Committee Members

Irene Champion
Grant Howard
Di Salau
Laura Whitbread

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