



TREAT Newsletter Cool Season April - June 2003

TREAT on TAP

By Maree Morgan

In September, groups from Tolga and Walkamin State Schools enjoyed excursions to the Tolga Scrub. They were given a captivating insight into the life of local bats by Jenny McLean who brought two delightful babies from the bat hospital ensuring that all present were thoroughly enchanted.

A hard act to follow, but the children were fascinated when Nola Joseph and Syb Bresolin shared their first hand knowledge of the value of the rainforest to the Yidinji. Everyone then joined in a 'magic forest' walk with Tony Irvine as he shared his expertise on the Mabi Forest.

Four Tableland schools have been involved in the activities provided during the 2002-2003 Summer and the TREAT on TAP team has been welcomed with great enthusiasm by staff and students.

Class room visits take place during first term to coincide with the planting season (hopefully accompanied by lots of welcome rain). Until now the program has always taken place in state schools in this region, but 2003 included our first visit to a private school when we conducted two classroom sessions at St Joseph's School, Atherton. Our team received a very warm welcome. They have incorporated the TREAT on TAP activities into a special environmental studies unit as part of their first term curriculum.

The two classes had separate classroom visits and separate trips to the nursery but all fifty Stage Two students joined together for their school planting on the 2nd April. In addition to normal shade trees for the school oval this planting will include a small bush tucker plot which should provide interest for future classes.

These trees are surely guaranteed a good start as one of the teachers arranged for a good quantity of mulch to be provided on planting day. The nursery visit was of special interest to the children and you may have noticed a colour photograph on the front page of the Tablelander.

If you read the Cairns Post you will have seen the article recording the Walkamin State School planting on 19th March accompanied by a charming photograph of one of the students. The staff, parents and students gave us a very warm welcome and surprised the team by providing a delicious morning tea prepared mainly by the students. There is a special atmosphere in one-teacher schools and their trees have already been receiving TLC with lots of mulch and watering.

The same program was taken to Butchers Creek State School commencing with a classroom visit on the 17th March and the children were just as enthusiastic. They were shown trees which were planted by TREAT and some of their predecessors many years ago to make a wind/shelter belt along the school fence.

Many thanks to the TREAT volunteers and nursery staff who all helped with this year's TREAT on TAP program. There can be no more rewarding experience for a volunteer than to see the beaming faces and shining eyes of the children as they share in these learning activities and make new discoveries about our wonderful environment.

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Kids Page Batty Batty Bat!

Thousands of trees, not much rain!!

By Joan Wright

It is rather ironic that TREAT and the CTR planned a very full planting program on seven sites in a drought year!

At the first planting on the 18th January on the Barron River near the Picnic Crossing Reserve, the summer weather was warm and dry, but some rain fell later.

The February and early March plantings on Peterson Creek and the Barron River had encouraging rainfall, but the planting at Cherry Creek in mid-March saw the onset of fine, sunny weather again. Irrigation had to be used to help establishment at some of the plantings. This is a new development.

Each of the sites had over 3500 young trees planted, grown specifically for each location in the Lake Eacham nursery.

Most of the plantings were supported by the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust. Each grant covered one third of the total cost of a project and two thirds was the voluntary work of TREAT itself, such as seedling production, planting and administration.

The Barron River Integrated Catchment Management Association and the Mabi Forest Working Group have cooperated with some of the projects on the banks of the Barron River.

Four of this year's projects aim to continue riparian restoration on Peterson Creek and the Barron River, which are stepping stones between forest remnants. The overall plan at Peterson Creek is to build a corridor to link the Lake Eacham National Park and the Curtain Fig Tree forest at Yungaburra. The Lower Peterson Creek Landcare Group is planting on the Creek towards Lake Tinaroo.

On the Barron River this year, three plantings have built on those of previous years. The vision of a Mabi Forest corridor between the Wongabel Forest and Lake Tinaroo is inspiring but very long term. Volunteer tree planters and land owners add to it every year.

Cherry Creek is near Kairi and is a new area for a TREAT planting, as is the Ithaca River at Tarzali, the site of the last March planting.

At Malanda, TREAT made our second contribution to the restoration of the banks of the North Johnstone River. The Wet Tropics Tree Planting Scheme and the local Landcare groups have continuing programs in this area.

The support of members and the public at all the plantings has been most encouraging. There have never been fewer than fifty volunteers, young and old, at all the events, and without them TREAT could not do the good public work it does. The expert nursery team is, of course, essential for preparation, organisation and maintenance of the plantings.

The barbecue get-together, organised by TREAT Catering Inc. gave us an opportunity to catch up and hear news, as well as providing refreshment after real effort. The Tableland community is a wonderful group of people!

Visitor Centre Update

By Barbara Lanskey

The development of the new Visitor Centre is now well under way. The highly skilled local artists, Stanley and Kaisa Breeden, were chosen to design an interpretive plan and write the associated text.

This phase has been completed and Stan and Kaisa are now into the construction phase to make the design and text a reality.

There has been much consultation with TREAT members and a group forming an informal Steering Committee has been meeting very regularly on Friday mornings.

The expected completion date is the end of June, so look out for an Official Opening date after that.

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Seed Collectors Diary

by Helen McConnell

The dry weather in January, February and March this year has made seed collecting relatively easy compared to some years, when the rain made it impossible to keep anything dry and looking up to see fruits was a challenge to say the least.

Here are some of the fruits /seeds we collected in the three months: Brown Tamarind [*Castanospora alaphandii*], Red Bean [*Dysoxylum muelleri*], Floppy Ash [*Findleria scottiana*], Rose Butternut [*Blepharocarya involucrigera*], Quandong [*Elaeocarpus coorangaloo*], Guioas [*Guioa lasioneura* & *Guioa acutifolia*], Black Wattle [*Acacia aulacocarpa*], Kauri pines [*Agathis microstachya* & *Agathis robusta*], Lime Berry [*Micromelum minutum*], Iron Malletwood [*Rhodamnia spongiosa*], Red Cedar [*Toona ciliata*], Lignum or Malanda Ironwood [*Austromyrtus minutiflora*], Hairy Walnut [*Endiandra insignis*], Yellow Walnut [*Beilschmidia bancroftii*] Black Walnut [*Endiandra palmerstonii*], Ribbonwood [*Euroschinus falcatia*], Glue berry [*Cordia dichotoma*], Sarsaparilla [*Alphitonia petriei*], Bog Onion or White wood [*Anthocarpus nitidula*], Hard Alder [*Pullea stutzeri*], Peach Cedar [*Trema orientalis*], Red Carabean [*Geissois biagiiana*], Ince Beech [*Gmelina fasciculiflora*], Damson plum [*Terminalia sericocarpa*].

The figs we collected were the Hairy fig [*Ficus hispida*], Red Leaf fig [*Ficus congesta*], Boonjie fig [*Ficus destruens*], Sandpaper fig [*Ficus fraseri*], Atherton fig [*Ficus leptoclada*], Small Leaved fig [*Ficus obliqua var obliqua*], Banana fig [*Ficus pleurocarpa*], Cluster fig [*Ficus racemosa*], and Septic fig [*Ficus septica*].

Most of these figs make excellent water's edge and edge species and are used in these locations in our plantings. No matter what time of the year you can always find a fig in fruit.

Magnificent leaf flushes of many species have made seed collecting all the more enjoyable with the very noticeable one at the moment being the silvery white flush and flowering of Candle Nut [*Aleurites rockinghamensis*]. Lots of the laurels have been flushing brilliant pinks, apricots and reds like the Coach Walnut [*Beilschmidia tooram*], Endiandra leptodendron, Rusty Laurel [*Cryptocarya kumminoniana*], and Murray's Laurel [*Cryptocarya murrayi*]. When taking a drive towards Millaa Millaa and down the Palmerston range watch out for the large shiny red trifoliate leaf of the Red Carabean [*Geissois biagiiana*], it is stunning.

Wanted

Are you a little bit creative?

By Ted Fitton

Would you like to be responsible for organising and setting up displays at various functions and shows on the Atherton Tablelands for TREAT?

I have been doing this for several years and would like someone else to take over and bring some new ideas to this voluntary position. It is very interesting work and entails setting up new information posters and appropriate photos covering the various aspects of TREAT's activities. All help will be given. Transport is required. Please see someone at the nursery on Friday mornings or call on 4095 3406 for further information.

What is happening in future months?

August - TREAT Annual General Meeting (with elections)

October - Weedbuster Day

November - Annual workshop at the Nursery

- Rainforest tree identification
- Fruit and seeds information

Two small pockets

By Bryony Barnett

Two small pockets of forest on the waters edge was all that remained of the original Mabi forest when we bought our 20-acre property near Kairi in 1997. Except for a five-acre wedge of native timber trees planted under the former Community Rainforest Revegetation Program (CRRP) the rest of the property was pasture.

Today the landscape looks a little different as we progress tree planting projects each wet season. In early 2002, inspired by TREAT's plantings on nearby Pelican Point (Lake Tinaroo) we decided to seek Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funding to help with our project. The aim was to fence the lower property boundary to keep the cattle out of the lake and the forest remnants, and replant the area between.

The NHT application process was pretty daunting, but we were encouraged to give it a go. We rallied support from the Barron River Catchment Group (Helen Adams) and Trea (John Hall) and invited them to talk on-site about our idea. Neighbours Peter and Margaret Dollman (TREAT members) generously bundled us into a boat to get a broader perspective on the issues of management and restoration of the flood margin. So, in partnership with the Barron River Catchment Group, with letters of support from TREAT and Sunwater, we submitted our NHT application in March 2002 to be advised of our success in July!

By October, with the land looking painfully dry and the lake dropping before our eyes, the new fence was in, and the cattle drinking from a trough instead of the lake. Our Mabi remnants, true to character, were suffering heavy leaf fall in times of stress". December saw us preparing the site slashing and removing boulders from the volcanic soil as the water receded still further. Black beans and flame trees were in full flower as if they were anticipating new company.

In early January (2003) Peter Dellow (CTR) inspected the site and added our name to his list of Friday plantings. He recommended a manageable planting of around 300 trees an important consideration for us, currently commuting between Kairi and Townsville. With a promise of 220 Treat trees to supplement our home-grown collection the planting was scheduled for 24 January. Much-needed rain came just in time to green the grass so we could apply the herbicide.

On the afternoon prior to the planting the QPWS team arrived with augers to dig the holes. In no time at all the ground was littered with blisters of rich red soil, watered and ready for the new seedlings.

The next morning Peter and Phil arrived early, with trays of healthy 5b seedlings. Combined with our own, we had 310 plants - 40 different species (impressive diversity!) suitable for framework, pioneer and edge planting.

The team of 15 enthusiastic Treat members arrived soon after and wasted little time. By mid-morning the mulching and watering was completed whilst John and the QPWS erected a temporary fence to protect the trees from the wallabies.

It was hard not to wince when Peter took to the new trees with the secateurs. He explained that, in an exposed site such as this, and with strong winds expected, the trimming reduced the leaf area and water loss through evaporation, giving the little trees a better start. We learned that some trees, like the bushy *Syzygium australe*, could tolerate pruning of their growing tip. Others that relied on apical growth for their shape (e.g. *Firmiana pappuana* and *Brachychiton acerifolius*) had their leaves reduced in size - just a temporary loss of identity!

I couldn't suppress my excitement at seeing it all come to fruition. Almost a year since we started to plan the project we were seeing the rebirth of a small patch of this precious vanishing vegetation just a dot on the map, but of huge significance to us. It was only possible with the wonderful support of neighbours, members and staff of TREAT/ QPWS and the Barron River Catchment Group, and of course the NHT funding.

As a spin-off, surrounding neighbours are all inspired to plant trees. In time our two small pockets of Mabi forest will be one larger pocket which, if all goes to plan, will get bigger each year.

The Taste of Black Walnut the fruit of the month

By Tony Irvine

"Gosh I can smell vomit!" said Sam Mcoy as he wandered through the Boonjie forest with Betty Bunji and Danny Janggaburu. Suddenly a huge tree emerged before them with a dark, weeping stain on the trunk. "A lot of big guwaa smell like that" said Betty. Danny, a Yidinji man travelling with Betty through her Ngajonji country, said to Sam, "It is called guwaa here but in our area around Gadgarra, we call it balay". "What's its English name?" asked Danny. "It's Black Walnut" replied Betty and Danny together. "Syb and Warren from Lake Eacham nursery told us its scientific name is *Endiandra palmerstonii*." "Those science names sure are funny" said Betty and Danny.

"They take a lot of learning but we remembered that one because it is a valuable food plant for us." As they spoke they noticed many globose, yellowish to orange fleshy fruit on the ground. The fruit walls were corrugated with vertical grooves and the fruits were about 45-60 mm long x 45-65 mm wide. Betty picked one up and broke the yellowish flesh open. Inside was a large smooth, globose, hard-shelled structure which surrounded the seed. The shell had one point on the end. Another shell vertically had no point and was smooth all the way around. "Ganggi" nuts are similar except the shell usually has a point at each end and the shell has a rough surface," said Betty. "Ganggi is the name for Yellow Walnut fruit in both languages" said Danny.

Betty placed the hard shell of a guwaa fruit on a stone and hit it with another stone to crack it open. A large, globose, brownish seed about 35 mm long x 40 mm wide was revealed. She cracked it open to reveal a faintly pinkish to apricot cream colour to the inside of the seed (the *endocarp*). "Sometimes the colour is creamish and this is what we eat after cooking it" said Betty.

There were quite a few nuts on the ground that had portions of their shells (*endocarps*) chewed open and the seed was missing. "Durrigim the White-tailed Rat has been here, cleaning up the seed" uttered Danny "and because durrigim eats the seed you will seldom find a seedling below the tree. Occasionally cassowaries will swallow the fruit and disperse the seed."

Sam Mcoy said "Gee whiz! I wish we were on private land as I would arrange with the owner to cut the tree down. I could make some valuable cabinet furniture from its timber." "That was a problem for the old people" said Danny. "Timbercutters would cut Black Walnut trees down and combined with competition for seed from durrigim, it would make it more difficult for the people to find food as small trees can take a long time to begin bearing fruit. Growing from seed and planted in ideal conditions it probably takes at least twenty years to fruit or even much longer."

"But doesn't it grow all over the place" asked Sam. "No" replied Betty and Danny. "From what our neighbours say, it only grows naturally between Cairns and Tully and inland to the rain forest edge from sea level to about 1100 m altitude in wet to very wet areas on a range of soil types."

Betty gathered lots of the fruit and said to Sam, "This evening we will have some guwaa and I will show you how we cook it."

That evening, Betty explained to Sam that she could steam the nuts in an earth oven, crack them open, grind the seed into flour, wash with running water and consume it with the wet flour stage. The other way of cooking was to throw the nuts into the fire for a few minutes and this is what Betty did. The nuts were pulled out of the fire, cracked open and offered to Sam. A smell of fresh bread passed Sam's nose and as he tasted the seed he said "Gee it tastes like fresh warm bread."

Future Treat Events

Geology Field Day & BBQ at Halloran's Hill, Atherton.

Visit to a farm with established tree planting.

Donaghys Corridor. Field visit to the wildlife corridor between Lake Barrine National Park and Gadgarra State Forest.

Watch the local papers and listen to ABC local radio for dates

Field days will be held on Saturday afternoons in June, July and September.

Nursery News

Staff Changes

There have been a number of staff changes, as most members would be aware, with the recent resignations of long standing senior CTR staff members Nigel Tucker and Tania Simmons. Their departure ensures a significant loss of local and ecological knowledge and experience, to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, to CTR and to TREAT. We wish them well with their new ventures.

Peter Dellow is currently head of staff at CTR and is doing great work managing the nursery, staff and projects.

Claire Cardwell will complete her traineeship, Certificate II in Horticulture before the Easter break after which she will join our staff as a casual employee. Congratulations to Claire for the skills and knowledge she has acquired over the past eleven months.

We would also like to welcome two new Certificate II Horticulture trainees, Darren Caulfield, who commenced in February and Josh Anning, who commenced in March.

Students

CTR is currently hosting two students, Sven Kowalski and Raff Schultheis, both from Gottingen University, Germany. They will be accommodated from March until the end of May 2003. During their stay they will be assisting CTR staff and TREAT volunteers with current projects inside and out of the nursery as well as undertaking their own research project. Their assistance is greatly appreciated and we wish them a happy and productive stay in Australia.

CTR would also like to extend a warm welcome to James Field who has been assisting nursery staff three days per week since February. James is currently participating in a part-time workplace based training program organised by Tableland Employment Agency and will be with us until mid-August.

Building

Over the last few months the new office facility has gradually (due to the busy nature of the season) reached the operational stage. There is still a fair bit of cleanup work to do in the old office, like relocating files, books etc but once this is achieved, TREAT will enjoy better use of the available space.

We can also look forward to the progression of works in TREAT's visitor centre which is well underway.

Steam Steriliser

Good news for the pot washers, young and old, the steam generator and sterilising cabinet are both at the nursery and undergoing some performance trials. At this stage the results are promising and with a bit of fine tuning, (adding some insulation to the cabinet) we should see the end of scrubbing and be able to put the resulting chemicals away for good.

All that is required now will be the development of a safe work procedure and training program to ensure the health and safety of staff and volunteers using the equipment.

Lastly, don't be alarmed if you see what appears to be dirty pots or trays be used at the potting bench any soil or old potting residue left on the containers will be free of pathogens having undergone a sterilising process rather than manual scrubbing.

Stop Press!

An entry has just been made to the Prime Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence by Joan Wright on behalf of TREAT. Watch this space!!

Acknowledgement Party

On Friday, April 11th, Nigel Tucker and Tania Simmons joined TREAT members for morning tea at the nursery. "Hurrah for the past and the future" was inscribed in sugar on the top of the special cake. These short words expressed our thanks for all they did for TREAT over many years, and our best wishes to them both for the future.

Geoff Tracey, co-founder of TREAT spoke of the necessity at this time particularly for the kind of environmental awareness and ecological restoration that TREAT and the nursery developed together over 18 years.

Nigel spoke of the importance he places on community work in local land-care type work and the influence volunteers can have on the direction in which society moves. Tania told us of her arrival at the nursery and the work she has done in forest being the standard to its present high level. TREAT on TAP, Tania children coming to appreciate trees at the nursery and in the forest being her great interest. Although Nigel and Tania no longer work at the nursery, they are members of TREAT. Both have joined in the 2003 planting program.

Preventing Soil Erosion in Revegetation Projects

By Kendrick Cox

An NHT-funded pilot study is being conducted by DPI (Walkamin) and the Eacham Shire Wet Tropics Tree Planting Scheme to determine the potential to use sown grasses to minimise erosion during riparian-zone revegetation projects on the Atherton Tablelands.

Revegetation of riparian zones on the Atherton Tablelands often involves chemical removal of tall pasture plants and naturalised weeds prior to planting, thereby increasing the risk of soil erosion during large rainfall events before tree canopy closure. Currently, all tall weeds are sprayed with herbicides until canopy closure, which can take up to three to four years, leaving soil exposed to erosion. Many pasture grasses have fibrous root systems which bind soil and minimise soil loss, but many of these plants do not tolerate shade.

The strategy of the pilot trial is to use low growing, well adapted, but shade intolerant and readily purchasable grasses to provide a short-term ground cover in tree plantings. This will hopefully reduce the risk of soil erosion and make maintenance of sites easier through the suppression of tall weeds.

Six grasses were planted in small plots in flood prone, steeply sloping and terraced areas in a Maxlin Creek planting. They established well and are being monitored for spread and the ability to hold soil. It is hoped that any promising grasses will be assessed on a larger scale in local plantings as the need arises.

For more information please contact: Kendrick Cox

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