

The Fort Bushland Reserve

January 2008 Notes - by John Lahey

The attendance at our January working bee was well down on previous months but this was to be expected for January. The weather was really hot and sultry so I think everyone was happy to call it quits at 10 o'clock. The council people are doing an excellent job clearing the bank below the Passionist Fathers and poisoning the Ochna.

This month I've added four species to our census of native plants.

Aristolochia sp. (D'Aguilar Range L.H.Bird+ AQ520943)

I found this undescribed species of *Aristolochia* on the bank in the area we have been clearing below Fort Road. It is only about 7 cm high but carries a disproportionately large flower and another flower bud. I could not find any information about it on the internet but I think it grows as a very small straggling creeper. There are about 6 small plants growing within about a 1 metre of each other.



This species is in the same family as *Pararistolochia praevenosa* and *Pararistolochia laheyana* which are the host species for the magnificent Richmond Birdwing butterfly. Over recent years there have been numerous plantings of *Pararistolochia praevenosa* in Brisbane and the surrounding districts in an effort to re-establish the Richmond Birdwing butterfly population. I have a number of plants in my garden and they seem to be very drought tolerant once they are well established. I've only been watering one of my plants and it is carrying about a dozen fruit that are now almost ripe. A few years ago I planted the small heart shaped seeds from a fruit and all seventeen seeds germinated and are now small seedlings. I'd love to give these away to people in the area who can give them good homes. Please let me know if you can help as the more plants we have in this area the greater the likelihood of attracting the Richmond Birdwing butterfly. As they almost said in *Field of Dreams* "If you grow it they

will come!” Finally if you have the exotic Dutchman’s Pipe (*Aristolochia elegans*) growing in your garden, please consider pulling it up and replacing it with *Pararistolochia praevenosa*. The Richmond Birdwing butterfly is attracted to *Aristolochia elegans* and lays her eggs on the leaves but the hatching caterpillars find the plant toxic and all perish. That’s the end of my little commercial.



Aneilema acuminatum (Aneilema)

This is a vigorous but weak stemmed ground cover plant that likes moist and well shaded forest areas. It is related to our blue flowered native Wandering Jew *Commelina cyanea*. I found it growing beside the new fire trail where it seems to be associated with the regeneration of the native plants following the removal of the Cat’s Claw and Ochra. I’m hoping that with continuing good weather it will spread.



Aneilema biflorum (Two-flowered Aneilema)

This plant is growing flat on the ground but it will grow up through low vegetation. It is closely related to the previous species and also likes moist partially shaded positions. As the name suggests each inflorescence bears two small white flowers with flimsy petals about 8 mm across.



Desmodium rhytidophyllum (Rusty Tick-trefoil)



This twining perennial creeper grows to about a metre in length, scrambling over the ground or small plants. It likes well-drained soil in open forest situations. The tiny 6 mm mauve flowers are carried on long loose racemes that can carry up to 30 flowers.



This month I've removed one species from our census of native plants. Last month I incorrectly added *Portulaca pilosa* to the list based on some superseded reference material I was using. It is now considered to be an introduced species that has become naturalised and is now widely distributed throughout Australia. However it does not seem to be a problem plant and not one I think we should specifically target for eradication.

The following plants have flowered this month.

Hippocratea barbata (Knot Vine)

This is a woody vine that uses its lateral branches to grow right around supporting plants to form closed loop like knots. It has shiny dark green leaves up to 9 cm long and 5 cm wide. The greenish yellow flowers are about 9 mm across and highly fragrant. The fruit is a leathery capsule from 3-5 cm long containing winged seeds. Since I've only found this one plant in the reserve I'm hoping it will produce seeds this year.





Acacia complanata (Flat-stemmed Wattle)

This is a very showy small wattle that has bright golden yellow pompom shaped flowers. The stems are flattened with a winged ridge along each side of the stem making it very easy to identify. I've only found a couple of plants in the reserve but there are quite a few growing beside Fort Road in the Canossa bushland.



Acacia disparrima* subsp. *disparrima (Brown Salwood, Hickory wattle)

This wattle can be separated from the other wattles in the reserve that have similarly shaped phyllodes ("leaves") by observing the veins in the phyllodes. In this species the longitudinal nerves never join each other. The flowering period is very short lived, lasting only a few days to a week. I was amazed to note that all the trees of this species in the reserve and around the district came into bloom on virtually the same day.



Pseuderanthemum variabile (Love flower, Pastel flower)

This pretty little ground cover plant has flowered really well this year. While most plants have plain dark green leaves about 10% have this beautiful patterning in the leaves.

Alphitonia excelsa (Red Ash, Soap Tree)

This medium sized tree is quite common in the reserve and I've noticed seedlings coming up in the cleared areas. The



leaves and fruit were crushed by aborigines and used as a fish poison. It is the host species of the Small Green-banded Blue butterfly and most trees show evidence that insects have been eating the leaves.



The following plants have fruited this month.



Citrus australis (Native Lime)

In September this tree was covered in flowers and it seemed that it was being pollinated very well by swarms of European honeybees. However it didn't set many fruit and the few that it did set are now falling. This species is a noted bush tucker plant producing round rough-skinned fruit up to 6 cm in diameter. However the fruit here are only about 15mm in diameter and quite tasty but resinous and not very juicy. Only one fruit yielded a seed and this didn't appear to be fully developed (although I did plant it). Given the lack of any seedlings surrounding this mature tree, I suspect it isn't very fertile.

Maytenus bilocularis (Orangebark)

Although these trees were covered in flowers in September they set relatively few fruit, with some trees setting none at all. However the plants seem to be scattered through the reserve so I assume that they have a good seed dispersal mechanism probably by fruit eating birds.



Drypetes deplanchei (Yellow Tulip)

This medium sized tree is very common in the reserve, although most plants are still quite young. The species is dioecious and flowered in September, but at that time I could only find male trees and the photo below is of the male flowers. I've now found two female trees covered in ripe fruit. The fruit are edible and very attractive to some birds.



Solanum stelligerum (Devil's Needles)

This little shrub grows to about 3metres and is covered in very sharp thin prickles about 10 mm long. It seems to flower more or less continuously, with the fruit ripening several months later. The bright red fruit are about 8 mm in diameter and I assume that like most species of Solanum they are poisonous. (See July 2007 Notes for photo of flower)

Everistia vaccinifolia* var. *nervosa (Small-leaved Canthium)

I've only found two specimens of this species in the reserve and they were both covered in small fragrant cream-yellow flowers a few months ago. The small fruit are about 5 mm across and turn from green to shiny black when they ripen. Refer to February 2006 Notes for a photo of the flowers.





***Pouteria pohlmaniana* (Yellow Boxwood)**

These trees flowered prolifically in November and it is pleasing to see that they have set a lot of fruit. The fruit is now about 20mm in diameter but not yet quite ripe. They contain 3 to 5 seeds which have a characteristic elongate white scar.

***Onthophagus dandalu* (Dung Beetle)**

I found this little native dung beetle busily trying to deal with a comparatively large and solid wallaby dropping. This is the most common species of dung beetle in Brisbane and can often be found burying dog droppings. The beetle rolls the dung into a ball and buries it with an egg. The developing larva then feeds on the buried dung.



***Euploea core corinna* (Common Crow butterfly)**

This is one of our more common butterflies and its caterpillar is shown here feeding on a young *Parsonsia straminea* vine which is probably its main native host. However it has taken a liking to many of our introduced plants and is frequently seen on Oleanders and is often called the Oleander butterfly.



The next working bee will be held on Sunday 3 February at 8 am.