

The Fort Bushland Reserve

November 2007 Notes - by John Lahey

We've made great progress in our assault on the Cat's Claw creeper. Most of the remaining creeper to the north of the erosion gully, that still needs to be cut down to ground level and poisoned, is in the north-west corner and on the tongue of land which runs from the body of the reserve to the river. Excellent work was also done in cutting and poisoning the Ochna at the head of the erosion gully.

On Friday the council workers started removing the exotic trees and shrubs on the steep bank below the Passionist Fathers' property.

I've noticed that the Cat's Claw on the southern side of the erosion gully has gone absolutely wild in the last month following the recent rain. I keep hoping to see the introduction of the mooted biological control insect/s.

This month I made five additions to our list of native plants growing in the Fort Bushland.

Commersonia bartramia (Brown Kurrajong)



I found a couple of these plants growing near the area beside Cliveden Avenue which was partially cleared by the council



of the climbing cactus. (Eradicating the cactus is still a job in progress). The actual plant in flower is on the nature strip on the

other side of Cliveden Avenue. This plant grows into a small tree and the fruit is a capsule covered in long soft bristles up to 25 mm in diameter containing small dark brown seeds.

Brunoniella australis (Blue Trumpet)

This small perennial herb has apparently remained dormant during the prolonged dry spell. With the recent rains it has produced new growths with flowers from the underground stems. The plant pictured is only about 25mm high but carries a disproportionately large and showy flower. The plants do grow to a height of about 15cm. I've found a number of these plants in the cleared area along the Eddystone Road extension.



Echinostephia aculeata (Prickly Snake Vine)

I found a couple of these vines (although possibly from the same rootstock) growing in the area near Eddystone Road that has been more or less cleared of Cat's Claw. The stems are covered in fine prickles and it climbs by twining around supporting plants in a snake-like fashion. The plants are dioecious and produce small reddish-orange fruit. I believe it is a relatively uncommon species.



Hybanthus stellarioides (Yellow Spade Flower)

This pretty little herb is an annual that grows to about 30cm. I found it growing in the cleared firebreak on the eastern boundary of the reserve and along the Eddystone Road extension. A caterpillar of the Glasswing butterfly (*Acraea andromacha*) also found it attractive. Note 1.



Ficus coronata
(Creek Sandpaper Fig)

This fig with sandpapery leaves grows into a small tree to about 6 or 7 metres high. I'm surprised that I haven't found more plants as it frequently comes up as a seedling in our garden presumably from seeds spread by birds. The plant I found in the reserve had been cut off near the ground (possibly by an over-enthusiastic bushcarer) and had then regrown.

The following plants have flowered this month.

Coelospermum paniculatum

I've only found one plant of this strong woody climber that has scrambled to about 5 metres high with a stem diameter of about 2 cm. This month it produced masses of pale



cream fragrant flowers in terminal clusters. The leaves are dark green and very glossy with prominent domatia along the midvein which appear as raised lumps on the upper surface of the leaves. The fleshy fruit is purplish-black and about 8mm across.



***Siphonodon australis* (Ivorywood)**

I've only found 4 of these trees growing in two locations in the reserve. There are two trees growing near the base of the wattle that has recently fallen across the southern firetrail. It produces a hard yellow fruit up to 50 mm in diameter that can contain up to 10 seeds.



***Hibiscus heterophyllus* (Native Rosella)**

A couple of dozen of these native hibiscus are scattered through the reserve. The leaves and stems are covered in short prickles and feel very rough to touch. The large pinkish-white flowers are very attractive but unfortunately short lived and close and fall off within a day. Anyone who has walked along the southern firetrail in the past fortnight has probably spotted the large clump of hundreds of these seedlings growing right in the middle of the road. It is obviously a pioneer species and I've transplanted a couple of dozen of these seedlings to the weeded areas.



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

Several of these small trees are now smothered in flowers with the buds clothing the smaller branches and twigs. The photo on the right shows a closeup of



an open flower and a mass of unopened buds. The flowers only open sufficiently to provide about a 1mm hole for access by the pollinators. I would expect the flowers to be pollinated by a specific species (or genus) of insects but was unable to find any information on this subject. Interestingly the flowers somehow shed a small white spherical shell about 3 mm in diameter with holes in each end through this tiny opening. I'm hoping that the trees will set some fruit which are yellow or purplish and about 20 – 25 mm in diameter.

***Eustrephus latifolius* (Wombat Berry)**

In my April notes I included a photo of this plant carrying its bright orange berries. The plants are scattered through the bushland and are starting to flower now. The flower petals are fringed and it carries a large mass of pollen. I saw a medium sized native solitary bee busily collecting a heavy load of pollen from these flowers but it flew away before I could get its photo. The plant has a twining growth habit climbing to several metres up small trees and shrubs.



A number of plants that flowered recently are now carrying fruit.



Flindersia bennettiana (Bennett's Ash)

These trees which flowered from 3 to 6 months ago have set a number of large 5 sided prickly fruit that contain winged seeds. If you check out the trees you can spot the fruit high in the tree-tops which made them difficult to photograph.

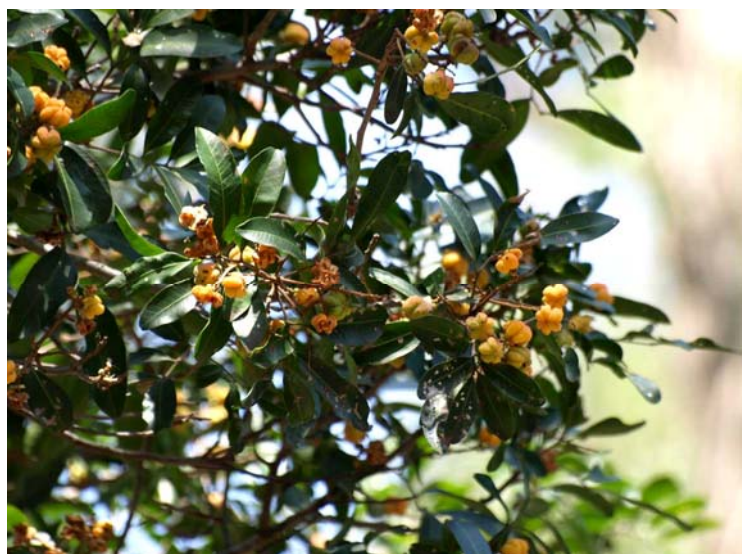


Vitex lignum-vitae (Satinwood, Lignum-vitae)

If you have been for a walk through the reserve recently you might have seen these bright pink/red fruit on the ground. They have fallen from the *Vitex lignum-vitae* trees of which there are about half a dozen in the bushland. One large tree has a stem diameter of about 60cm but was severely damaged by the Cat's Claw creeper and 12 months ago I didn't think it was going to survive. Fortunately with the removal of the Cat's Claw and the recent rains it is now looking much healthier and seems to be on the road to recovery. The trees are fairly easy to identify with their relatively smooth light brown bark, fluted trunks and dark glossy green leaves.

Cupaniopsis parvifolia (Small-leaved Tuckeroo)

The tree which flowered so well a few months ago has produced a bumper crop of fruit. The fruit contain three black seeds which are covered in a bright orange aril. The seeds seem to be much loved by fig birds which I hope will provide good seed dispersal. Every morning there are several scrub turkeys under the tree greedily devouring any fallen seeds.





Croton verreauxii (Native Cascarilla)

It is pleasing that the *Croton verreauxii*, which has struggled to recover from being completely overrun by Cat's Claw, has flowered again this year (See November 2006 Notes). However this year it has set a small number of fruit so I'm hoping we may be able to propagate some new plants as I've only ever found the one plant in the reserve.

The next working bee will be held on Sunday 2 December at 8 am.

Note 1. My thanks to Dr. Sheldon Navie for his identification of the caterpillar. He very kindly responded to the enquiry I made to the Brisbane Rainforest Action & Information Network.