



2024

The Challenge of Change

# EUCALYPT

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## WHY CONFERENCES MATTER – A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE –

**Kate Heffernan**  
**Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens Inc.**

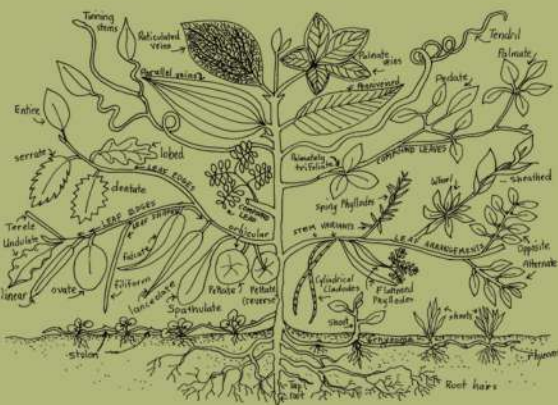
In 2010 I attended a Botanic Friends Gardens Conservation International Congress at the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland, Glasnevin, Dublin. Four years had passed since the community-driven Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens' (GCRBG) first planting day – needless to say, I immediately felt out of place among the Curators, Directors, and senior staff of some of the finest botanic gardens across the globe.

Dr. Peter Wyse-Jackson, former Secretary-General of Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) and Director of the N.B.G Ireland, welcomed the delegates with opening remarks that put me at ease. He, and later other keynote speakers were unwavering in their endorsement of the new generation of regionally focused botanic gardens, and their role in conservation, education, community engagement, and research of indigenous plant species.

The first botanic conference I attended was the Gardens International 2001 Congress in Canberra, where I was equally inspired by a private lunchtime conversation with the late Dr. Judith Zuk, then Director of the renowned Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. A few years later I attended my first Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens (AAFBG) conference at the very young and exciting Australian Garden at Cranbourne.

These conferences, and the encouragement, inspiration, and friendship of Lawrie Smith AM and members of AAFBG gave me the stamina necessary to persevere in a less-than-enthusiastic local government environment. My reserve was cemented repeatedly by each attendance at AAFBG Conferences and Botanic Gardens Australia New Zealand (BGANZ), as well as one more BGCI Congress.

I've appreciated the input of committed volunteers, as well as high-level professionals – all of whom I respect, and whose contribution I value. All of whom foster the appreciation and impact of botanic gardens on the community, and work to ensure the communities' understanding of the environmental challenges facing us all. They have all made a difference in what and how I do things!



Art in Nature Based Learning: page 8

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# AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION of FRIENDS OF BOTANIC GARDENS

The AAFBG has 68 members all round Australia plus five overseas associate members. See our website for a full listing.

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## President's report

Linda Beveridge

This Eucalypt Magazine comes to you twice a year electronically and soon after via the post as hard copy. In it we feature interesting insights into the broader world of Friends of botanic gardens.

Gardens for current Friends, and for future generations, involve dealing with change in the gardens and in community involvement with the gardens.

**Challenges of Change** conference is being hosted by Friends of **Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens 23-26 August**.

A highlight at the conference is recognizing the significant role of Friends of gardens. The Handbury Awards were established in 2020 when Geoffrey bequeathed \$50,000 to the AAFBG. The awards recognise community achievements and support of botanic gardens Australia wide. We will have great pleasure in presenting Handbury Awards to the six 2024 recipients at our conference at Maroochy Regional Botanic Gardens on 24 August 2024.

It is exciting to see that the **keynote talks** will be about the beauty of gardens connecting plants with people in modern and relevant ways, and experiences of changes now and for the future by gardens in a variety of environments such as sub-tropical gardens, bushland gardens, and the growing importance of regional botanic gardens.

**Friends Rapid-fire** (or "Brag") short stories are inspiring as we hear about how Friends address changes in their botanic gardens. We see Friends of botanic gardens being key players in gardens' roles in conservation, education, community engagement, and research of plant species.

Conferences are fabulous for networking and sharing knowledge and experience, insights to new skills, developing collaboration, and support for meeting new challenges.

Kate Heffernan's article on why conferences matter illustrates how conferences inspired her activities as a Friend in dealing with the development of the gardens and broader issues.

Profound issues are in Nicky Swan's article about Mossman Botanic Gardens shows how Friends of these gardens have the opportunity for weaving into the garden the usual science and conservation ideals as well as showcasing the deep human cultural history of the land, and their part in biodiversity training, land management training, and support around research into ethnobotany and plant medicine.

Biodiversity education and training is also a key point in Graham Tupper's article on inspiring nature-based learning for Friends of different ages and experience as well as broader community engagement with great effect.

**We are looking forward to sharing more experiences and ideas with you at Maroochy in August.**



Kate Heffernan  
Image: supplied

Kate Heffernan, a former Queensland Chair and National Representative of BGANZ, has presented at many AAFBG, Australian, and international conferences. She contributes to journals, including various horticulture journals, and was Saturday Morning Garden presenter for ABC Gold Coast.

Kate is now semi-retired, but spends much of her time in professional and volunteer roles consulting to botanic gardens along Australia's east coast.

**Kate Heffernan is MC during the 2024 AAFBG Conference.**

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Benefits have been explicit and productive, as well as sometimes less tangible (but equally crucial). They have included the sharing of knowledge and experience, networking and getting to know people in my field, skills-based workshops, understanding government regulations and sometimes attitudes, developing collaboration, support for grant applications, and exchanging ideas. And importantly visiting and learning from the host botanic gardens and making new friends. Face to face builds trust and lasting relationships.

Contacts I've made have enabled me to develop behind-the-scenes tours of botanic gardens in the United Kingdom, France, and Ireland. Our AAFBG Australian Botanic Tours have also relied on fellow members and contacts. There is always a welcome to friends in Friends.

The forthcoming conference at Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Garden will be my fourteenth in a twenty-six-year involvement, as a Friend of GCRBG and professionally to GCRBG and other botanic gardens across several states. Every conference has delivered some new insights, and each has been a reminder of the critical role of every style and size of a botanic garden.

They have all entertained and motivated me, as well as given me new insights to continue my commitment (sometimes at a much-needed time). Without the contacts made and experience gained by attending and at times presenting at Conferences I doubt I could have lasted the distance.

This year's AAFBG conference title is The Challenge of Change. So relevant in a world that now seems to spin too quickly. It provides a short space in time to take a breather, learn together from the speakers and each other, and make friends in Friends. I look forward to meeting and sharing ideas with fellow AAFBG members there.



Friends chatting about our experiences and ideas at AAFBG Eurobodalla Conference 2022  
Image: supplied



# Maroochy Regional Bushland BG, and Friends

**The 2024 venue for the AAFBG Conference has a bushland setting with a big 'sigh factor', and offers the magic of the bush with the meaning of managed gardens and collections.**

In 1996, the then Maroochy Shire Council helped to promote the need for a botanic garden, and a Friends group was established in May 1997 under the leadership of Maureen Sheargold.

The founding Members advocated for the 82Ha bushland site that was bought by Council, and the group subsequently funded Lawrie Smith's 1998 Master Plan before the Friends became heavily involved in supporting the initial infrastructure and garden beds.

The Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Garden [MRBBG] opened in December 2001, with the Fern Glade and adjacent gardens leading the way towards development of collections of Sunshine Coast species. The managed garden areas grew to take up some 25Ha of the site by the time the Sculpture Garden opened in 2006. The Lagoon Walk and the Creek Walk gave access to natural and regenerating bushland as well. The Arts & Ecology Centre opened in 2011 in recognition of the need for a flexible public facility for exhibitions, workshops, meetings and events, and office space for staff including a permanent Senior Horticulturist. By 2014, and under the newly-formed Sunshine Coast Council, another successful collaboration between Friends and Council led to the upgraded Whipbird Walk discovery area for children being complemented by the Whipbird Village - an active 'nature play' space.

Thanks to Environment Levy purchases of significant bushland, the site has doubled in area, with two new bushwalks added and another being prepared to eventually make a trail network of over 12km. Walkers are immersed in a range of vegetation types that host dozens of bird species and 14 koalas, carefully monitored along with other wildlife by monthly Faunawatch surveys. Some 400 plant species exist on the site naturally, providing an experience of dynamic diversity as well as inspiration for the Garden collections. With MRBBG's popularity, public awareness of local species has also grown, and their uses in home gardens for shade, diversity and wildlife have affirmed the value of a botanic garden as a valued feature of the new Sunshine Coast Biosphere. Significant plant species on display include *Graptophyllum reticulatum* and *Triunia robusta*, both endangered and locally-endemic.



Text: Malcolm Cox  
Images: Greg Miller

Some 110,000 visitors annually forego the beaches and other features of the Coast to spend time at MRBBG, wandering the garden paths, exploring the bushland trails, taking a guided walk, viewing an exhibition or just meeting up at the Compass Institute's 'Garden Café' (a social enterprise). The arts:ecology connections range from an outdoor collection of over 35 works of public art to nature journaling activities, artists-in-residence, a statewide children's art prize, WildHeART, and the Friends' fundraising sales exhibition 'Inspired by Nature'. In the same exhibition space, lectures and workshops have featured Natives Naturally (for Your Garden), the Backyard Series (by Council) and the Backyards to Biosphere (by the Friends) - all aimed at helping locals to understand and grow local species and all made possible by Council:Friends collaboration.

Council's award-winning environmental education initiative 'Kids in Action' engages some 30 local schools in a series of curriculum-driven events annually, while the Great Botanic Race and Koala Trail activities offer interest and adventure for young and old alike. Weekend music and other entertainment events add necessary recreation and relaxation experiences that give people even more time to appreciate the natural appeal of the bushland setting.

Week by week, Staff and Volunteers/Friends work together to ensure public enjoyment and safety as the key to positive experiences that will bring people back. After the gardening, general maintenance, propagation and even specialised care of sculptures, morning tea cakes and bikkies confirm that it is also a social catch-up and discussion time. Currently they also share the effort of investigating species needed for the new Butterfly Garden, designed around a system of arbors and nodes dedicated to the Richmond Birdwing butterfly life cycle. The Friends' wish is that this project paves the way for even stronger Council:Community collaboration and more effective 'botanic gardening' in future.



Text: Malcolm Cox  
Images: Greg Miller



Coolamon  
*Syzygium moorei*

## Queensland Botanic Gardens

**Kate Heffernan**

Each of Queensland's Botanic Gardens has its own landscape character and plant collections, yet each is linked through its commitment to the philosophies and roles of botanic gardens across the globe. In Queensland, there are over 20 botanic gardens. Some are grand gardens well-funded by supportive state or local authorities, have Curators and remunerated staff as well as Friends and dedicated volunteer groups. Some struggle sometimes with diminished funding, or the enthusiasm of their founders is replaced by local government bureaucracy and indifference, yet their Friends and any on-site staff continue to work tirelessly to entice visitors curious to see the fascinating world of plants.

Just over a decade ago with practical and financial assistance from Friends and BGANZ a Queensland Botanic Gardens Trail brochure was created by an honorary committee that included the then Curator of Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens, Dale Arvidsson, now Curator of Brisbane's network of gardens including the historic City Botanic Gardens, Brisbane Mt Coot-tha Botanic Gardens, and Sherwood Arboretum. Dale is a keynote speaker at this year's AAFBG Conference. Dale's extensive experience across the four diverse gardens will be valuable to those attending.

The Trail brochure was designed to connect with the network of travelers keen to see regional plant species and associated wildlife and to discover something of each region's character. Or to visit botanic gardens where they could learn about exotic plants ecologically compatible with the local environmental and climatic conditions.

Each botanic garden provided an image and a prescribed number of words of text promoting visitation. Brochures were distributed across Queensland's botanic gardens and proved successful, but inevitably there was not a second print run. Online information on the AAFBG and BGANZ websites is one replacement for the Queensland Trail brochure. Those who are seeking a visit to botanic gardens on their travel would most likely search by the town or city name, but I wonder if that would lead to other botanic gardens along the way. Queensland's major Garden Expo held at Nambour each year has also provided an opportunity for promotion, with volunteers from Noosa Botanic Gardens and Maroochy Regional Bushland providing the people power.

Across Queensland the network of botanic gardens grows and displays thousands of significant taxa, plants threatened and endangered in the wild, or plants representative of Queensland's 13 classified bioregions. Some botanic gardens included in the trail are part of the early history of the state, established as Acclimatisation Gardens where plants were grown and tested for their potential as new crops.

The momentum for new botanic garden development peaked several times during the 20th Century, especially in the 80's because of stimulation by Australia's bicentenary, led by Landscape Architect Lawrie Smith AM. Lawrie, who is one of the major speakers at the forthcoming AAFBG conference intensified the push for Queensland's regional botanic gardens and a succession of regional botanic gardens were established through the 1990's and early 2000's.

Each botanic garden in Queensland has different standards of botanical discipline, many undertake an incredible breadth of work behind the scenes in conservation, science, and education, and their records, herbariums and plant collections contribute to the knowledge of horticulture. Queensland's botanic gardens provide opportunities for adults and children to explore and investigate the extraordinary world of its state's unique plants, they invite discovery and many also invite involvement. Friends' groups actively contribute, and some are the driving force behind their establishment, existence, and perpetuation. Across the state, Queensland's botanic gardens hold a unique collection of the diverse flora of the state, supplementing the research and knowledge of our unique Australian flora. They are beautiful and interesting places to visit, and contribute to their local economies by encouraging visitation, and have a critical role in the science of botany. They are also pivotal in the larger Australian and global network whose role is to 'secure plant diversity for the well-being of people and the planet'.

From Goondiwindi to Gladstone, Cooktown to Toowoomba, Gold Coast to Emerald and all points between, Queensland's Botanic Gardens bring joy, as well as educate, inform, inspire, demonstrate, and engage their communities and visitors.

Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens, our hosts for the forthcoming conference are an important and inspiring part of the Queensland Botanic Gardens network. If you are booked or considering heading to Maroochy for the AAFBG Conference try and add a few extra days to visit some of the region's botanic gardens.



## Visit Queensland's Botanic Gardens



# Creating Connections:

## Botanic Gardens as Places to Inspire Nature Based Learning

**Graham Tupper,**

**President, Friends of the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden, Coffs Harbour**

Education and nature based learning is an important aspect of the purpose of botanic gardens. Learning happens in many different ways in a garden - from plant labels and garden signs, to tours and workshops, to school education resources and garden activity programs, and increasingly to online tools which complement the garden experience including use of photos, video, sounds, interactive games and the creative arts.

How might volunteers and staff at botanic gardens enhance the learning experience of visitors and schools about plants and nature? How can we avoid reinventing the wheel to discover and adapt innovative approaches developed and tested in other botanic gardens?

Innovation abounds in educational resources and approaches in botanic gardens across Australia. From signage which utilises more illustrations and incorporates sound, to new visitor apps or adding of QR codes for more information, to school curriculum linked and teacher friendly education kits based on a structured experience of nature at a garden.

Quality educational tools and materials are not easy or cheap to produce. There is a huge opportunity to learn about and adapt for local use the innovative approaches developed by other botanic gardens. For example, to promote or add local examples to quality online resources such as the Plant Science Learning Hub developed at the Australian National Botanic Garden.

Another example, generated entirely by volunteers in a regional botanic garden is the evolution of an online Nature Gallery about what lives in the garden, using Instagram to 'feed' the garden website. In Coffs Harbour this was developed as a collaboration between the Friends of the Botanic Garden and a local website designer funded by the Friends.

The Nature Gallery has evolved to become an online plant and animal database which is maintained and fact checked by volunteers. This new online Nature Gallery then became a resource for schools education kits linked to activities to inspire young curious minds, such as creating artworks about shapes and textures in nature, or to take photographs and videos to help understand and appreciate the natural world.

There are many other examples of printed resources or online educational tools being used to great effect in botanic gardens, often with outstanding photos or illustrations and with fact checking by garden volunteers, often with decades of experience. These could be adapted for use in other botanic gardens with acknowledgement or permission of the source author. Adapting an existing successful resource would require much less effort and cost to produce. Some botanic gardens have paid professional education officers who are connected by the BGANZ network who might facilitate this. All gardens have volunteers with some introductory visitor information or schools materials. How might we increase the connections amongst volunteer Friends of Botanic Gardens to enhance this collaboration?

The potential for expanding the array of quality educational resources in botanic gardens across Australia is enormous. The potential to increase the understanding of the natural world through botanic gardens is even greater. As Albert Einstein once said: "Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better".

Learner with her leaf collage and mum Image: supplied



### Further reading



ANBG  
Learning hub



Nature  
Gallery



Learning  
Resources



# What makes the Mossman Botanic Garden such a compelling story?

**Nicky Swan, CEO Mossman Botanic Garden**

Located in the heart of the Wet Tropics and surrounded by the world's oldest rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef, the Mossman Botanic Garden will deliver a unique 21st century research Botanic Garden on 22 hectares of ex-cane fields in Mossman. We are a community based not-for-profit organisation with a grand dream not only for science and conservation but for education, cultural, social & community outcomes in the Far North.

We are reimagining and developing, from the ground up, a botanic garden that not only supports and promotes biodiversity & conservation but also helps showcase the deep human cultural history of this land. The Mossman Botanic Garden offers a unique opportunity, to weave into its garden designs, cultural First Nations ethnobotanical knowledge and skills, shared with us directly by the Traditional Owners of the Wet Tropics.

Living collections and seed banked material will be held in the gardens to be used for multiple purposes other than just conservation. These purposes include horticultural and agricultural research, Eastern Kuku Yalanji Ranger and land management training, biosecurity training, global plant and seed exchange, habitat restoration and First Nations research support around ethnobotany and plant medicine.

As a major project for Northern Australia, the Mossman Botanic Garden represents a botanic garden for the Australian Tropical Herbarium, which is based in Cairns, that centres its knowledge on the 1% of our nation, that is the Wet Tropics ancient Gondwanan rainforest.

A 10-minute drive from Port Douglas in Far North Queensland, Mossman Botanic Garden sits in the middle of the Mossman township.

The economic driver of the project is membership. Anyone can be a member for \$50/year, and once built, this membership would provide entry for every day of the year. Non-members would be charged to enter the rare plant collection & activity area which will be similar to a membership fee. We are hoping that our interstate and global visitors would be happy to buy an annual membership to support the work of MBG in science and conservation and renew that membership to be part of the project. Tourists in the future may choose to spend half their day at Mossman Gorge and the other half at the Garden or stay an extra couple of days in the region to explore our flora.

There has been an initial investment to date of over \$2M from the Commonwealth Government for the land purchase, a major Masterplan and Stage 1 schematics. Through further government support, membership fees, donations, and sponsorship we are looking to commence Stage 1 in 2025. The entire Mossman Botanic Garden project is staged to ensure sectors of the garden can open to the public as quickly as possible. We are currently collaborating with Botanic Gardens from around the world and working with researchers and scientists to ensure that everything the MBG delivers is to a world class best practice standard.

The Mossman Botanic Garden is the "Garden of Origins" and set to deliver a critical piece of the global conservation jigsaw with the overall project not only showcasing the preservation and conservation of the Wet Tropics ancient flora but a World Heritage National treasure creating a message of hope and innovation for the region and Australia in the face of climate change.

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- LEGEND**
- 1 GARDEN OF WOVEN MEMORIES
  - 2 CIRCLE OF PLENTY GARDEN
  - 3 COMMUNITY GARDENS
  - 4 NATIVE FRUIT AND NUT ORCHARD
  - 5 BIO SWALE
  - 6 PARKING
  - 7 HARDSTAND
  - 8 CONSERVATORY
  - 9 NURSERIES
  - 10 OFFICES
  - 11 EVENTS LAWN
  - 12 CHILDRENS NATURE PLAY GARDEN
  - 13 REGENERATION FOREST
  - 14 ARBOUR
  - 15 BOARDWALK
  - 16 CANOPY TOWER LOOKOUT
  - 17 EVENTS ZONE
  - 18 AMPHITHEATRE
  - 19 LAKE
  - 20 WET TROPICS GARDENS
  - 21 CAULIFLORY LAWN
  - 22 NYMPHAEAE PONDS
  - 23 CAPE YORK GARDEN
  - 24 QUEENSLAND SAVANNAH
  - 25 TROPICAL PALM GROVE
  - 26 CLOUD HOUSE
  - 27 FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL HUB
  - 28 FUNCTIONS & EVENTS
  - 29 CAFE BOOKSHOP
  - 30 CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
  - 31 QUARANTINE STATION



**MASTER PLAN**



# Gargarro Regional Botanic Garden

Located in northern Victoria, in the tiny village of Girgarre, the Gargarro Botanic Garden officially opened in May 2023. The garden has been designed by Taylor Cullity Lethlean (TCL), the landscape architect responsible for the Australian Garden at Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne, and the National Arboretum in Canberra. This native garden is owned and maintained by the Girgarre community; no funds are received from any level of government for recurrent expenses.

A Masterplan for Gargarro was completed in 2014. The design reflects Girgarre's agricultural hinterland, the square mile grids, the patchwork nature of the farming land, and linear tree plantings, all intersected by a network of irrigation canals. The garden will eventually comprise five sensory gardens, See, Smell, Touch, Taste and Listen.

Stage 1 has seen the completion of an open parkland area, an amphitheatre and soundshell capable of hosting 1200 patrons, an ephemeral stream, lookout tower and the first of the sensory gardens, the See Garden. Also located in the precinct is the Gargarro Café, a bespoke two-story building which has been extremely popular since opening in March 2023. Behind the Café is the Gargarro Nursery, owned and operated by the Friends of Gargarro, and open to the public on Thursdays and Saturdays.

It hasn't all been easy sailing since the Friends began the mammoth task of planting the 20,000 pots and tubes required for the See Garden. The Gargarro site is almost like a billiard table, extremely flat. It was inundated twice in October 2022 and again over the New Year of 2024. This resulted in heavy plant losses in some beds. It is already an enchanting experience to wander around Gargarro, however, visitors should be patient, the best is years away. A fact recognised and appreciated by the 35,000 visitors who have wandered through the botanic garden in its first year of operation.

A Business Case to support the completion of the Gargarro Masterplan has recently been completed, and the Girgarre community is looking forward to further development of the garden.

Athol 'Doc' McDonald



# The Challenge of Change

Relationships - Volunteering - Climate - Technology

## 2024



### AAFBG CONFERENCE



## 23 - 26 August

Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Garden

### Join us as we tackle the big issues and explore solutions

- to create rewarding **relationships**
- to work well with **volunteers**
- to identify opportunities within a changing **climate**
- to employ **technology** that enhances our message and effectiveness.

Keynote speaker: Dale Arvidsson, Curator of Brisbane Botanic Gardens.

Pre and post conference tours of Sunshine Coast Gardens.

Twilight welcome drinks and Handbury Award presentations.

Conference Dinner at Mooloolaba Beach.

### Key Takeaways

You will leave armed with a portfolio of experiences gleaned from Gardens around Australia. Learn what has worked and what hasn't, as well as:

- **valuable information**
- **new networks**
- **actionable ideas**

to share with your Friends group.

For further information

[www.FriendsBotanicGardens.org](http://www.FriendsBotanicGardens.org)



Enjoy August on the Sunshine Coast



images: Visit Sunshine Coast



AAFBG  
WEBSITE