Top End Native Plant Society NEWSLETTER

JANUARY/
FEBRUARY 2025

WHAT'S FLOWERING THIS MONTH!

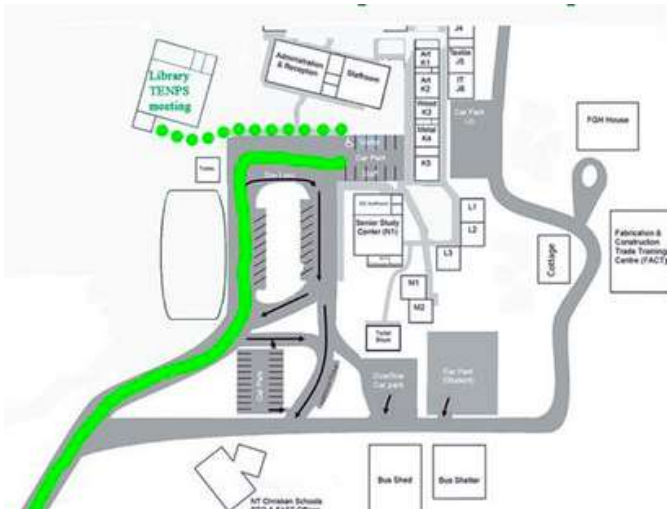
Leea rubra with butterfly by Russell Dempster

Monthly Meetings

Top End Native Plant Society (TENPS) general meetings are held at 7:00pm on the third Thursday of the month at Marrara Christian Collage library on the corner of Amy Johnson Ave & McMillans Rd. Bring your plants to swap, sell or have identified over a cuppa. The guest speaker presents at 8pm.

This month Dr Elnaz Saki will give details on her PhD on the properties and medicinal uses of *Tinospora smilacina* (Snake Vine) and *Calophyllum inophyllum* (Beauty Leaf). All are welcome.

NEXT MEETING: FEB 20TH 2025



TENPS (TOP END NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY) COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President: Russell Dempster

0459440665

Vice President: Sean Stieber

Secretary: Johanna Stieber

Treasurer: Graham Zemunik

Publications & Librarian: Richard Boyne

General Committee Member: Ian Morris

General Committee Member: Clair Hewitt

Publicity: Vacant please inquire

Webmaster: Vacant please inquire

Public Officer: Dave Liddle

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

VISIT OUR FACEBOOK FOR INFO ON OUR NEXT EVENTS AND SALES!

www.topendnativeplants.org.au

topendnativeplants

November Meeting : Replanting for Wildlife by Ian Morris

I find it is not only good to know what form your little native potted plant is going to turn into as an adult tree, but also even better to know how that particular species fits into & benefits the native ecology. Promoting this understanding helps landowners to get maximum advantage when replanting their gardens or restoring their properties. The bottom line is, if we want to restore & maintain biodiversity in the vicinity of our properties, we must understand the interrelationships of our plants & animals.

When it comes down to it, there are many species of native trees & shrubs to choose from when considering natural restoration in suburban & rural gardens. The following is a selection of some of those plants which have had successful impacts on our local ecology in recent times.

Boobook Owl chicks in *Eucalyptus miniata* hollow

From the beginning, the retention of original trees can make a difference. For instance, the two dominant eucalypt species in our tropical savanna woodlands act as accommodation sites for a variety of wildlife species, particularly in their senile stage when they have developed a variety of hollows. Both Darwin Stringybark *Eucalyptus tetradonta* & the Woollybutt *Eucalyptus miniata* are essential in both the refuge & breeding cycles of many species of birds & animals, in addition to the annual nectar production. They were reasonably common throughout Darwin & its suburbs until recently. Whenever possible, these remnant trees should be preserved to ensure ongoing populations of birds like the Northern Rosella, Red-winged Parrot, Red-collared Lorikeet, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Forest Kingfisher, Owlet Nightjar & many others. Dependant mammals include the Savanna Glider, Brush-tailed Phascogale, Northern Brush-tailed Possum & a number of Microbat species.

Northern Brushtail Possum and young

Researching the attributes of the tree species you are considering for your project, it helps to know how & where to place them. This requires a look at natural forest dynamics & a vision for your project when it matures. Canopy species need to be well spaced apart. We have a fine example of a classic canopy tree here in Darwin. History tells us that the Top End supports an obscure Gondwanan tree which predates the world-famous Eucalypt family. This impressive tree, known to the Kunwinjku people of West Arnhem as Manbinik, *Allosyncarpia ternata*, is today naturally restricted to the West Arnhem Region, but we understand it was more widespread in the north during former climatic regimes. In more recent times this iconic tree has proved ideal in providing shade & shelter in suburban situations. Canopy formation, cyclone resilience, low water requirement, termite resistance, & longevity (over 500 years according to research) are all qualities that this tree displays.

Rose-crowned Fruit Dove on *Aidia sp.*

The second remarkable native tree species which has been successfully propagated in the Darwin Region is sometimes called the Sea Bean *Maranthes corymbosa*. Like the Manbinik, this large, non-deciduous tree displays virtually the same qualities, including termite resistance & profuse late dry season flowers & fruit, which are much sort-after by birds & animals. In return, birds like the Torresian Imperial Pigeon & animals like the Black Flying Fox are responsible for its wide distribution across the coastal forests of the north. Archer Cherry *Aidia racemosa*, is another smaller-sized monsoon forest tree which does well in Darwin gardens. Flowering profusely with strong night perfume at the end of the dry season, it produces numerous clusters of small, red fruit which are enjoyed by both birds & mammals. The shy Rose-crowned Fruit Dove is particularly fond of this fruit.

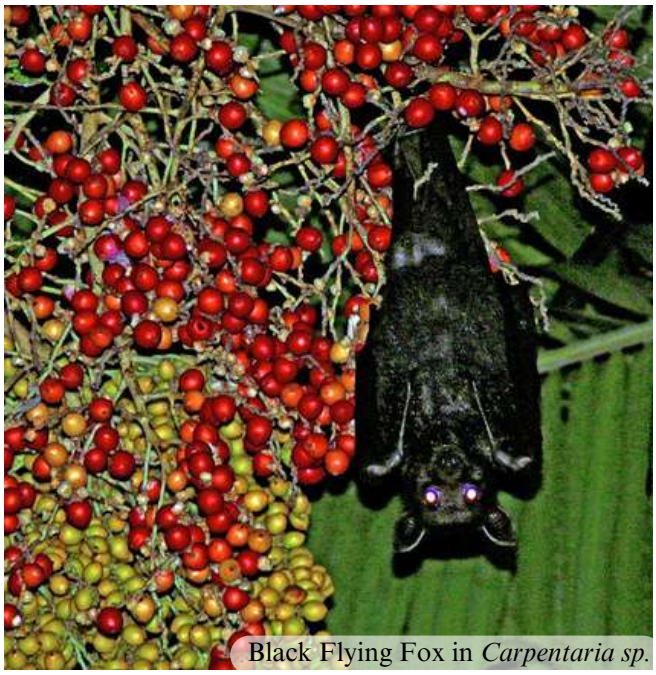
Sometimes known as the Freshwater Mangrove, Carallia brachiata is a large monsoon forest tree related to the Rhizophora family, which is easy to grow & also produces abundant small, red fruit which are in big demand by many of our forest birds. The colourful, day-flying 4 O'clock Moth carries out its life cycle on the large leaves of this tree. Another local monsoon forest tree which helps to restore our ecology is the Cluster Fig Ficus racemosa. A fast-growing medium-sized tree with large, rough-surfaced leaves & large fruit which bunches close to the trunk.

Nocturnal animals are attracted to these fruits on & around the parent tree. Here we have a variety of nocturnal Fruit-piercing Moth species feeding on the juice of the Cluster Fig during the wet season months. This & other insect activity also attracts insectivorous animals such as owls, bats & frogs.

There are many more good examples of local tree species which do well in in cultivation while reconnecting our regions ecologically. Virtually all of our native trees provide products for our wildlife, which in turn provide fertilisation & distribution patterns for their hosts.

Hidden amongst our insect fauna are the critical pollinators which ensure step one of the on-going integrity of our native plantations. This involves butterflies & moths, ants, wasps, to name a few. Some of our plants have specific pollinators while other are more general. Certain bats & birds also come into this category. Certain bats & birds also come into this category. The placement of native bee boxes can also increase the productivity of our projects.

Fruit-pearcing Moths on *Ficus racemosa*



Black Flying Fox in *Carpentaria sp.*

Torresian Imperial Pigeons in *Ficus benjamina*

Step two involves wildlife which distribute the fertile pollen & seed away from the parent tree. Some tree species are capable of self-distribution, such as our Kapok Tree *Bombax ceiba*, but a good percentage of forest species rely on mechanical distribution of wildlife. Seed is transported between isolated monsoon forest pockets in large amounts by birds like the Torresian Imperial Pigeon & animals like the Black Flying Fox. Even off-shore islands are serviced by these airborne agents, which maintain good genetic diversity for the forest patches over long distances, in otherwise geographically restricted circumstances. This distribution happens on a large scale between countries such as Eastern Indonesia, New Guinea & Northern Australia.

Whichever way we look at it, it is both rewarding & satisfying when our cultivating & restoring of native vegetation gets the thumbs up from our native wildlife. The bottom line is that no matter how restricted our project areas are, the reversal of the demise of native vegetation patterns is a great step in the right direction.

Riyala Plant Sale November 30

The TENPS 2024 annual event and plant sale was held on Saturday November 30 at 255E Gullick Road, Noonamah at Riyala. Territory Native Plants joined us again for the occasion. A large focus for the day was a plant sale. It was very successful, being held under shelter in the large meeting area between some of the dormitories. Again, there was an impressive array of plants for sale with over 1000 plants, including more than 100 species, being available.

We welcome the 15 new members to the Top End Native Plant Society who joined on the day.

There were a couple of talks from John Brock in the dining area. These featured some thoughts and details of some of John's favourite native plants. Thanks John, for your enthusiasm and commitment to the day and for all you do in promoting native plants and conservation of the beautiful Top End environment.

Ian Morris led walks around Riyala in the morning, beginning at the TENPS sale area. The walks were very popular, with Ian leading people down a track through the monsoon forest to the Elizabeth River which runs through the bottom of the block. Well done, Ian!

Live music was presented by Jaemie Page. Other features, guests and displays included Territory Native Plants, Territory Wildlife Park, NT Field Naturalists, Australian Bee Association (NT Branch), Territory Natural Resource Management, displays, sale of art works, calendars, jewellery, and books. Our guests added much value, interest and diversity to the day.

Thanks to all members who helped during the day, and thanks to all the friends of TENPS who added to the celebration. It made for a memorable and successful day.

Text and photos by R. Dempster

New imaging system and Curation Exchange


The imaging area in the ID Room

I'm pleased to announce that the Herbie can re-start imaging specimens after a long hiatus. We had a new PhaseOne camera and Mac Mini set up in our ID Room, which is what many other herbaria in Australia use now. One project is to finish imaging our type specimens for the Global Plants Initiative, just like what I used to do at Kew Gardens. We'll also image newly-mounted specimens and specimens that we're about to loan to other herbaria.

In the same week we hosted Matt Barrett from the Australian Tropical Herbarium in Cairns. He's an expert on tropical grasses and fungi. He came as part of the Curation Exchange Program, which supports Australasian botanists and curators to visit other herbaria with collections that interest them. In return, the hosting herbarium receives help with curating and identifying specimens and training for its staff. I went on fungal foray with Matt at Howard Springs and we came back with heaps of mushrooms, plus some Typhonium flagelliforme inflorescences. I recommend taking a bushwalk with a mycologist because they're great at spotting things you might otherwise overlook, like the tiny sporangia of a plasmodial slime mould *Tubifera*, shown below.

Text and photos by R. Boyne


Sporangia of *Tubifera sp.*


Typhonium flagelliforme inflorescence, cut open

30 YEARS AGO: MEETING REPORT

George Brown, Lord Mayor of Darwin was our guest speaker at our last meeting who spoke on "The Greening of Darwin - Past & Present". George gave us an insight into factors responsible for the wide range of of exotic species planted throughout Darwin today. The first mention of a nursery in Darwin was a Chinese nursery which imported fruit and vegetables in pots from China and the first mention of *Bougainvillea* in 1939-40. The range of trees and shrubs available in Darwin increased after Cyclone Tracy when large quantities of plants were brought in from elsewhere - these included 8,000 plants from Cairns. George acknowledges responsibility for introducing *Acacia dunnii* from the Kimberleys to Darwin. A much smaller plant in its native habitat - it has grown much larger in Darwin and has escaped into the bush around Darwin.

Eight years ago while wandering around the backblocks of Anabaroo he found an *Amorphophallus* tuber. Two years ago it sent up a flower spike about a metre high. He's sure it's a new species. He passed on some tips for propagating Top End plants which he found successful.

Banyans - place about 200 seeds in a bucket and leave to germinate.

Gronophyllum ramsayi - pack 100 seeds closely together in a 10" pot with straight thunderpeat and then cover with a couple of inches of soil. They will take 6-8-10-12 months to germinate, but this method has a 98% success rate.

20 YEARS AGO: OUR RURAL BLOCK BY STEVE POPPLE

We moved to Humpty Doo 4 years ago after a long process of house and land searching. We eventually settled on a block which was 50% cleared, with Tall Open Woodland dominated by some towering Eucalyptus tetrodonta and Eucalyptus miniata.

We inherited some great trees and an even greater number of weeds. You name it we had it, Mission grass, Gamba grass, Green Panicum, Snakeweed, Hyptis, Rattlepod, Calopo, Centro and Wild Passionfruit to name a few.

My first decision was to break the block into sections, and to concentrate on 2 weed species initially. I focused on Mission Grass and Gamba Grass because of their bulk, imminent flowering and fire potential. I started spot spraying clumps, and then during the dry when they stopped actively growing, I mattocked them out. This constant assault seems to be the most effective, and the overall population of these two weeds is now a lot more manageable.

Enough about weeds, I guess the big questions I had to address were: How am I going to manage the remnant native vegetation? What sort of native vegetation do I want? How do I manage the spear grass and fire? A quick drive up and down the street revealed there was a fair variation in the native vegetation just in my immediate area.

For example, there were no Grevilleas of any type on my block, yet both *Grevillea pteridifolia* and *Grevillea dryandi* were just a stone's throw away; similarly *Pandanus spiralis* and *Petalostigma pubescens* were absent. Firstly, I decided to reinstate native vegetation buffers around the block, whilst keeping the area around the house for all those exotic plants I love, including some fruit trees and a large veggie garden. On the fire issue, I decided not to burn, mainly because I thought that enough of the surrounding blocks were clear already, but I was nervous enough about that wall of dry spear grass to brush cut down large areas each year just as it started to flower.

Front section of block from house

My observations about spear grass are that after four years of no fire there is no obvious difference in the distribution and density of spear grass, so much for the loves fire theory! I've also noticed that lots of birds rely on the annual spear grass seed bounty, including Northern Rosellas, Red tailed Black Cockatoos and Little Corellas; and locally too many early burns are reducing the availability of this food source.

It soon became obvious that natural regeneration wasn't thick enough or quick enough to fill in the gaps. I started supplementary planting, and this raised a whole lot of new tasks like collecting seed, raising the seedlings and getting them into the ground early enough in the Wet so that they could become established before the rain stops.

The last three wet seasons I've planted about 300 per year, and when you look around you can hardly see where they went. Fickle December rain means I'm often carting water all over the block until the monsoon sets in. The Dry season is spent looking for seed, collecting seed, processing seed (the boring bit) and raising seedlings.

I've found *Grevillea dryandri* a bit fiddly to propagate and prone to sudden drop-dead syndrome when potted up, so I started transplanting seedlings from the roadsides, and provided I wait till the monsoon sets in I found these transplant and establish with 100% success. This method also works well with Turkey Bush (*Calytrix exstipulata*), provided you don't leave it too late in the wet season. I now also scatter *Grevillea* seed heads into new areas, and leave it to nature.

Revegetating area at rear of block

I decided to establish a monsoon forest area near the house, and I started planting out any species I could gather. This area is not irrigated and it's amazing how well young plants cope, though I'm convinced that growth and year-round appearance would be improved by irrigation. The best pioneer species I've found are *Carallia brachiata*, *Micromelum minutum* and *Breynia cernua*. I'm continuing to add monsoon species into this area with the long term plan of the monsoon species taking over from the *Eucalyptus miniata* which currently form a canopy overhead.

There is a lot more I would like to achieve, and lots more species I would like to grow, but for the moment my challenge is how to manage and incorporate more small herbaceous native species into the landscape, and how to better manage the weeds, particularly as their management is so time consuming.

I haven't mentioned all the wonderful plants we have on the block and maybe that can be a subject of a future article.

10 YEARS AGO: GOYDER DAY 5TH FEBRUARY 2025

A re-enactment of George Woodroffe Goyder arrival, coming ashore and placing the first peg to begin the city we know as Darwin.

Trevor Horman, President of the National Trust acknowledged traditional owners welcomed guests and thanked sponsors; FYFE Earth Partners and Earl James & Associates.

Terry O'Neill, from the Waterfront Development Corporation, outlined plans for the proposed Goyder's Camp Park. Trevor Menzies talked about the formation of historical attributes to hundreds. Belinda Osborne, from the Place Names Committee explained how the Moonta crew names are linked to Darwin street names.

President of Top End Native Plant Society, David Liddle told of the botanical significance of the expedition and the plants collected by botanists Schultz father and son and the TENPS stall displayed replicas of the drawings produced during the trip by botanical artist William Webster Hoare. *Myristica insipida*, *Jasminum molle*, all of which were illustrated by Hoare, plus examples of *Cyclophyllum schultzii* and the mangrove *Camptostemon schultzii* which were named for Schultz.

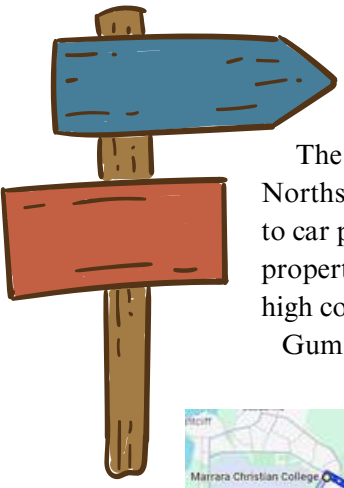
Part of the TENPS display, photograph by D. Liddle

The Arafura Wind Ensemble

Robert Sarib (above, left) spoke about the advancing professionalism of Surveying Spatial Sciences Institute (SSSI) and Surveyor General Craig Sandy, Goyder's legacy: surveying the Territory today. Trevor Horman closed proceedings by thanking every one.

SSSI and the National Trust are planning to continue to support Goyder Day in future and planning for next year's event will begin around September 2015, and TENPS will look forward to being involved with future events.

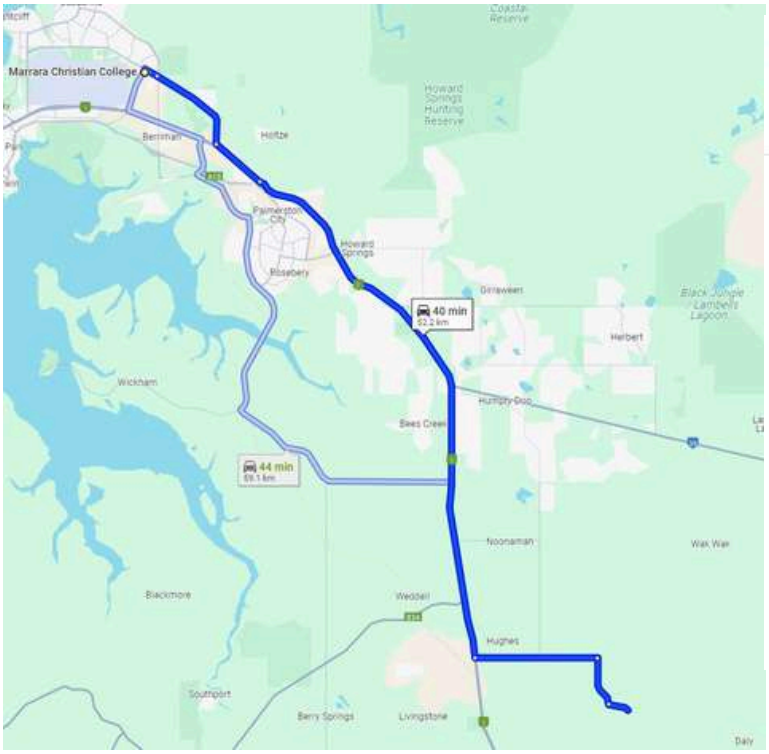
Article by Alex Bakunowicz and Sarah Hirst. Photos supplied by Alex Bakunowicz or as acknowledged.



FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP

The TENPS field trip for this month will be on Sunday 23 February to Ali and Adrian's block at 105 Northstar Road, Acacia Hills, at 3:00 pm. Meet at the Bendigo Bank at Coolalinga at 2:30 if you would like to car pool. The block has the number at the entrance and there is a long battle-axe driveway. The 32 acre property is all native vegetation backing onto Koolpinyah station. There are a range of habitats with some high country including a rocky ridge, and it goes down to a wetland area with magnetic termite mounds.

Gum boots or crocs are recommended footwear. Bring a hat, sunscreen and a water bottle.



40 min (52.2 km)

via National Highway 1

Fastest route, the usual traffic

Marrara Christian College
Marrara Christian School, Corner of McMillans Rd &, 110 Amy Johnson Ave, Marrara NT 0812

- Follow McMillans Rd to National Highway 1 in Knuckey Lagoon
  6 min (6.6 km)
- Follow National Highway 1 to Townend Rd in Livingstone
  25 min (34.8 km)
- Continue on Townend Rd. Drive to Northstar Rd in Acacia Hills
  8 min (10.8 km)

105 Northstar Rd
Acacia Hills NT 0822

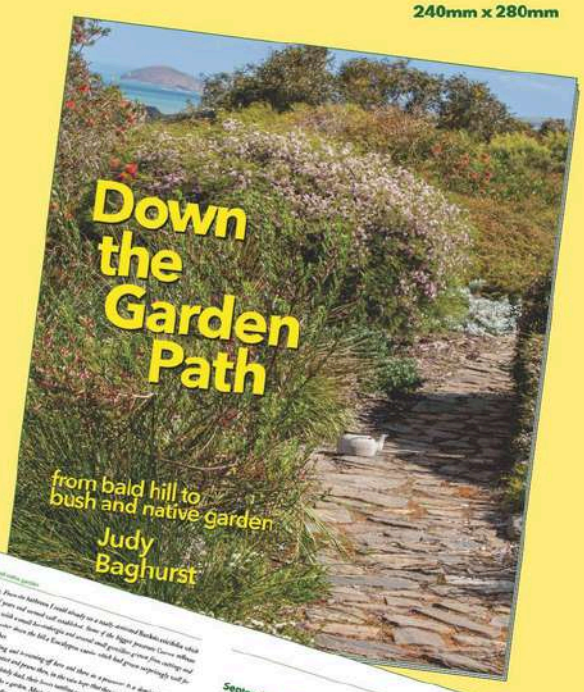
REQUEST FOR HELP

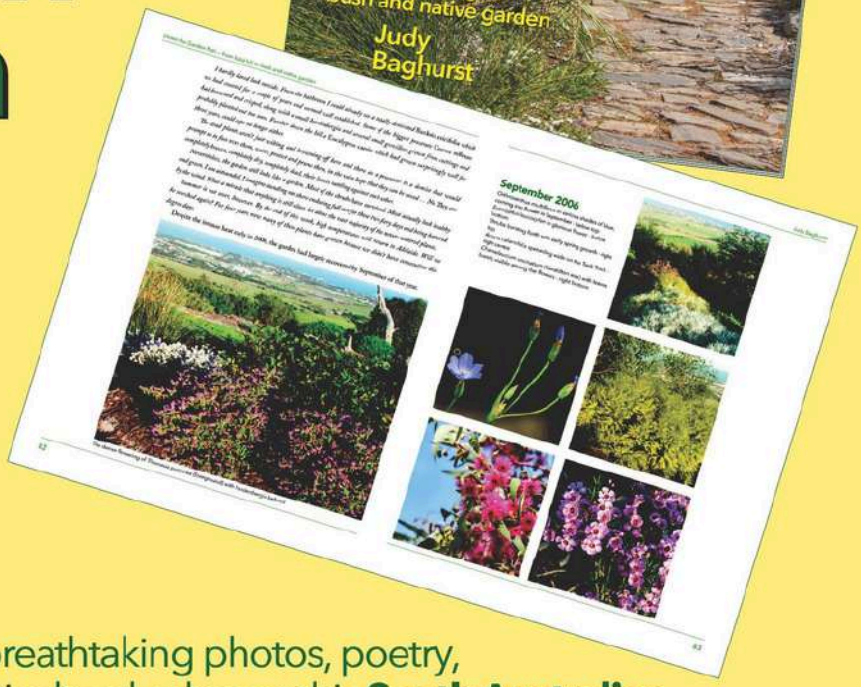
TENPS members and friends are invited come and join us for part or all of the day on March 15 at the Humpty Doo Village Green, to perhaps buy some plants and help out with plant sales. Please contact Russell or a committee member if you can help with plant sales for an hour or two.
See you there!


25% OFF selected Native Plants!
TOP END NATIVE
PLANT SALE
WHERE: HUMPTY DOO VILLAGE GREEN, 85 CHALLONER CCT
WHEN: SAT, MARCH 15TH. 8AM-2PM
GET YOUR PLANTS IN THE GROUND DURING THE WET!
Create an edible garden, restore habitat and support native wildlife with bird and butterfly attracting feature plants, cyclone and termite resistant shade trees and fragrant flowering native shrubs.
NOW AT HUMPTY DOO!
• Breakfast & BBQ Grill
• Freshly Brewed Coffee
• Ample Parking
OVER 120 NATIVE SPECIES INCLUDING
• Native Peanut & Nutmeg
• Eucalypts & Corymbia
• Grevillea & Acacias
• Bush Apples & Plums
• Rain & Flame Trees
• Boabs & Beauty Leaf
And much more! In all sizes up to 28ltr to suit your budget. Many species heavily discounted!
FAMILY FUN
• Shady playground, picnic area & skate park
NATIVE FLORA
• Native Plant Gardening Advice and ID
Proudly supported by Litchfield Council and Darwin Community Arts
Territory NATIVE PLANTS
Top End Native Plant Society
LITCHFIELD COUNCIL
act OUT

240mm x 280mm

Discover Down the Garden Path





Renowned South Australian gardener **Judy Baghurst**'s ***glossy hard cover coffee table book*** tells the story of a 21-year transformation of a bald hill on the hill face above Port Elliot into a thriving native garden.

At 196 pages, featuring 340 breathtaking photos, poetry, and the inspiring tale of a horticultural odyssey, this **South Australian** high quality memoir celebrates resilience and the healing power of nature.

The perfect gift.

A feast for the senses.

An invaluable reference.

Featured in
SALIFE Gardens & Outdoor Living Summer 2024

"... really inspirational, beautifully written ... I have enjoyed every moment of reading and looking . The poetry is so good to read ... it seems all in balance – the garden, the writing and the accompanying photos."
(Janet Ayliffe, artist)

rrp $70.00 plus postage and handling *or* direct pick up

Contact Judy Baghurst - jbaghurst@bigpond.com

Top End Native Plant Society

BECOME A MEMBER!

Member discounts for plant sales.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Due annually on 1st July each year)

The Top End Native Plant Society is a community group aimed at PROMOTING AND ENCOURAGING THE APPRECIATION, CONSERVATION AND STUDY OF FLORA NATIVE TO THE TOP ENDAND THE DIVERSE HABITATS OF THIS FLORA . The Society is active in the propagation and cultivation of Top End native flora.

Visitors are welcome to meetings held on the third Thursday of the month at 7.00 pm with a speakerstarting soon after. The venue is Marrara Christian College, on the corner of Amy Johnson Avenue and McMillans Road. Guest speakers are a feature of meetings and field trips are undertaken each month to a diverse array of habitats.

New Membership ☐ Renewal ☐

Membership fees are:

Individual Waged:	$35.00
Family Waged:	$45.00
Individual Unwaged:	$15.00
Family Unwaged:	$20.00

Payment: $_____

Family name:_____

Name/s: _____

Email address:_____

Postal address:_____

To pay online:

Bank : Bendigo Bank

Account Name: Top End Native Plant Society

BSB: 633 000

Account: 207 974 247

Note: Please include your name in the transfer reference and email the information in this form to topendnativeplantsociety@hotmail.com
Or pay in person at meetings or events where cash or card will be accepted.

Follow 'Top End Native Plant Society' on Facebook for information on current activities and events.

Contact us by topendnativieplantsociety@hotmail.com
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