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~ FEBRUARY 2006 NEWSLETTER ~ MEETINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

We meet on the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm. General meetings conclude by 8.15pm and are followed by a guest speaker beginning at 8:30 pm. There is time for a cuppa between the meeting and the guest speaker. The venue for the meeting is Marrara Christian School Library, on the corner of Amy Johnson and McMillan Drives.

All welcome. Bring plants to swap, sell or have identified.

~ NEXT MEETING THURSDAY 16th FEBRUARY ~

~ Lou Elliott ~

“Savannah Grasses”

Lou Elliott, from Charles Darwin University will talk about his work on savannah grasses in the greater Darwin region and tree and herb dynamics in response to fire.

~ FIELD TRIP SUNDAY 19th FEBRUARY ~

“Grasses – Native and Exotic”

Meet at 9 am at Knuckey Lagoons Recreation Reserve at the Berrimah Scout Hall on Brandt Rd. David Cash, Greening Australia and Lou Elliott, Charles Darwin University, have kindly offered to help us identify grasses. Learn which ones are native and which ones are weeds. Bring a grass you want identified, put as much as you can include flowers and/or seed, in a plastic bag. We might not be able to tell you precisely but should be able to identify it as a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ grass.

The Recreation Reserve is holding their monthly Flea Market on this day, with trinkets, food and drinks for sale.

~ OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS ~

“Potting-on Workshop”

Starting at 9am on Sunday 26th February

At the home of Sally Jacka and Greg Beresford, Lot 7 Solar Village, Humpty Doo
After the successful plant propagation workshop in December, tubes need potting-on to be ready for the TENPS plant sale at Willie’s Open Garden on the 8th and 9th April. Learn more about propagation and each participant get to take home six plants. To get there - Turn right off the Arnhem Hwy into Spencely Rd. Then left into Strangways Rd. and right into Dalgety Rd. Go to the end of Dalgety Rd. then continue on the dirt road after the ‘Private Property’ signs.

From here, arrows will direct you the rest of the way.

Please RSVP and for further details call Sally on 8988 5654

“Protecting *Microcitrus gracilis*”

Starting at 9am on Sunday 5th March

Cnr Sayer Road and Stuart Hwy, just south of Coolalinga

“Nervilia Sampling”

8.30am on Sunday 19th March

Charles Darwin National Park

Please contact Dave on 8945 6809 to confirm attendance. If participants are known, then they can be advised of last minute changes to the sampling schedule.

Meeting the third Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm at Marrara Christian School Library

~ADELAIDE RIVER FIELD TRIP~

On Saturday 19 November some intrepid TENPS explorers packed into a troop carrier and headed off down the Arnhem Highway to the Adelaide River Station. Willy Burgess coordinated the trip. He led us firstly to some monsoon forest patches growing on rocky outcrops. These patches seem to have been mostly protected from fire, probably because of the rocky nature of the outcrops. A common feature appeared to be a Rock Fig at each patch, accompanied by a number of other species. The size of each patch varied. After some refreshments we explored a more substantial monsoon forest a few kilometres away. The number of different species in this forest appeared greater due to the larger area covered by this forest. Yams (*Dioscorea* species) were in abundance as well as *Amorphophallus*. The remains of some *Amorphophallus* flowers were still present.

These are Australia's largest flower. The tall green emerging shoots of the *Amorphophallus paeonifolius* were striking, some being over one and a half metres in height.

Dave and Sally were kept extremely busy keying out plants in order to identify species and they did an excellent job. Several species were flowering, including *Grewia*, *Helicteres isora*, *Jasminum* and *Capparis* to name a few. Other noteworthy plants seen included *Miliusa traceyi* and *Elaeocarpus arnhemicus*. Unfortunately we also managed to find several cane toads.

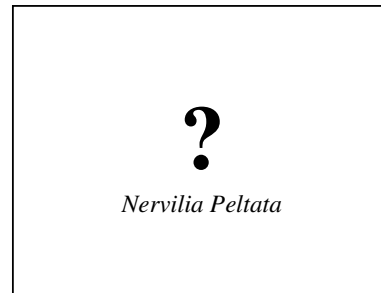
On the way home we crossed the Adelaide River on the Marrakai Road and stopped to see *Bambusa arnhemica* in flower.

Thanks to Willy for organising the trip, to Ian for driving us and to Hardy for accompanying us. We had a great time.

Russell Dempster

~THE ALLUSIVE FLOWER OF THE NERVILIA PELTATA~

The leaves are like miniature lily pads that push their way out of the soil and not being much more than a centimetre square they demand no attention and are often hidden under leaves and grasses. No wonder we have never seen a flower and despite members braving storms, sandflies, mosquitoes and intimidating walls of spear grass, we still have not witnessed these orchids flowering. Maybe next year.....



~DAVE LIDDLE'S OCTOBER TALK ON PTYCHOSPERMA BLEESERI~

15000 dots representing rainforest patches scattered across the Top End. There is a great scattering of rainforest patches in the Top End, many of which are very small, but they are interconnected. Genetic material is moved around the patches by fruit eating birds, most important dispersal agents.

Figs are a keystone species as they can fruit at different times of the year. *Ptychosperma bleeseri* conservation is a part of rainforest conservation. They grow in wet spring-fed rainforests, classified as type II jungles by

Jeremy Russell-Smith. A clumping palm, the terminal leaf set is the same width or narrower than the preceding leaf set. *Ptychosperma bleeseri* are a good indicator of what is happening in the spring-fed rainforests.

The BTEC campaign in the late 80's did a great deal for our rainforests – they have regenerated a great deal since the removal of buffaloes.

At Bankers Jungle only adult plants of *Ptychosperma bleeseri* have survived, being protected by their situation growing alongside and right up next to other plants. For example one is growing in the buttress roots of a *Sterculia holtzei*. The 1990 fence constructed at Bankers Jungle went into a state of disrepair resulting in the death of some adults as buffalo have taken their toll. Some have had their main trunks broken off and some have simply been pushed over. A new fence has recently been constructed.

Fire also has an effect on *Ptychosperma bleeseri*. Hot fires will kill them, but plants

can recover from fires, as evident at Whitewood Road, Howard Springs.

The increase in reliance and use of bore water in Darwin and the rural area has led to a lower water table in the dry season. This has meant that normally wet jungles are much drier and are therefore much more susceptible to fire, which have had dramatic impacts at Whitewood Road Jungle as it has suffered from major fire impacts. If the rate of increase of bore water usage continues into the future, the effects on spring-fed rainforests may be very significant. Susceptibility to damage and annihilation from fires will increase greatly.

Russell Dempster

~WEEDING CITRUS GRACIS ~

Michael and I heeded the call to weed around the *Citrus gracilis* on Sayer Road. We arrived at 9 am, but not knowing exactly where to go, drove aimlessly up and down the road a few times. Then I spotted the sign. The next step was identifying the tree. Having spent a few of my childhood years in the Riverland of SA, I thought I could identify a citrus sp. with my eyes closed. After a few painful pricks of *C. gracilis*' long thorns, I decided to proceed with eyes open.

But first, we decided to fortify ourselves with coffee, while awaiting the hordes of keen fellow TENPS weed-pullers. Only Liz turned up, so after her bananas and our hot drink, we set to work. Most of the trees were relatively

weed-free. So we decided to remove any Gamba grass or *Passiflora foetida* in the general area. Some of the Gamba was well-established and we had built up a sweat digging it out of the ground with a mattock, and then heaving it over to the side of the road.

We cleared around all the *C. gracilis* we could find, and then moved over to the other side of the gate and pulled up the grass there, clearing about seventy metres before calling it a morning.

Denise Lawungkurr Goodfellow



Liz and Mike weeding the *Citrus Gracis* patch..

~AUSTRALIAN WATTLES KEEP THE NAME ACACIA~

In a previous article I reported on a great taxonomic debate that looked like removing the hundreds of species of the genus *Acacia* from the Australian landscape and renaming them *Racosperma*. After many years of study, taxonomists investigating the 1350 species of *Acacia* in Australia, Africa, Asia and the Americas concluded that there were such distinct differences between groups of *Acacia* that these groups should be divided into different genera. There was as much variation between the different species of the genus *Acacia* as that occurring between species in different genera in other plant families.

Australia has the greatest diversity of *Acacia* with almost 1000 species in the Australian group but botanical nomenclature follows strict rules of precedence. So the wattle that was first described as an *Acacia* should retain the name *Acacia* and species in the other newly established genera should be given new genus names. That first collected specimen of the first named species of the genus is termed the type specimen of that genus. Unfortunately, the first plant described as and named 'Acacia' was an African species - so all the Australian species would need to be renamed.

Renaming all the wattles in the Australian group would impose considerable costs to forestry and horticulture industries as well as to botanical institutions in Australia. An international forestry industry uses Australian *Acacia* species for timber, fibre, tannin, fodder, human food and horticulture.

In 2003, Bruce Maslin a world renown expert on *Acacia* and a Senior Principal Research Scientist with the WA Department of Conservation and Land Management and Tony Orchard, of the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research, CSIRO Plant Industry, put a proposal to the International Botanical Congress to change the type specimen of *Acacia*. They proposed that the type specimen on which the name *Acacia* is based should be changed to *Acacia penninervis*, a member of the Australian group of wattles.

After considerable debate at the XVII International Botanical Congress in Vienna the Nomenclature Committee voted to accept the proposal put forward and this means that the Australian group of wattles will keep the name, *Acacia*.

Sean Bellaires

~WHAT WAS FLOWERING OVER CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS?~_



Mark took these photos of *Haemodorum coccineum*, over the Christmas break in Kakadu.

~ REQUEST FROM GREENING AUSTRALIA ~

Can you help Greening Australia with supply of plants for their landscaping of the Airport Terminal? Following is their plant list for the garden. These are the total numbers needed, some

of which they already have. If you want to sell or swap any of these plants, please give Margy at Greening Australia a call on 8981 1344.

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No.	Specie	Size		
Trees				
28	<i>Allosyncarpia ternata</i>	25lt Bag	138	<i>Acacia wickamii</i> 140mm
6	<i>Corymbia bella syn. Euc tintinens</i>	140mm	8	<i>Breynia cernua</i> 140mm
28	<i>Grevillea pteridifolia</i>	140mm	164	<i>Crotalaria novae-hollandiae</i> 140mm
7	<i>Helicia australasica</i>	140mm	5	<i>Diospyros compacta</i> 140mm
5	<i>Hibiscus tiliaceus</i>	25lt Bag	10	<i>Ervatamia orientalis</i> 140mm
45	<i>Maranthes corymbosa</i>	140mm	55	<i>Grevillea dryandri</i> 140mm
34	<i>Peltophora pterocarpum</i>	25lt Bag	7	<i>Grewia multiflora</i> 140mm
5	<i>Phaleria longifolia</i>	140mm	6	<i>Melastoma polyanthum</i> 140mm
27	<i>Timonius timon</i>	25lt Bag	Groundcovers	
Palms/Cycads/Pan.				
19	<i>Carpenteria acuminata</i>	25lt Bag	150	<i>Crinum angustifolium</i> 140mm
12	<i>Cycas armstrongii</i>	25lt Bag	220	<i>Curcuma australasica</i> 140mm
44	<i>Hydriastele wenlandia</i>	305mm	117	<i>Grevillea formosa Mt Brockman</i> 140mm
19	<i>Livingstonia benthamii</i>	25lt Bag	188	<i>Grevillea dryandra ssp goodii</i> 140mm
18	<i>Pandanus spiralis</i>	305mm	107	<i>Haemodorum coccinium</i> 140mm
Shrubs				
105	<i>Acacia hilliana</i>	140mm	150	<i>Hibbertia tasmanica</i> 140mm
19	<i>Acacia limbata</i>	140mm	120	<i>Vitex rotundifolia</i> 140mm
127	<i>Acacia nupperima</i>	140mm	Grasses	
38	<i>Acacia producta</i>	140mm	126	<i>Chrysopogon elongatus</i> 140mm
52	<i>Acacia sublanata</i>	140mm	Ferns	
			186	<i>Blechnum orientale</i> 140mm
			140	<i>Stenochlaena palularis</i> 140mm

HELICTERES ISORA L. **STERCULIACEAE (DC.) BARTL.** East Indian Screw Tree

The **Malvaceae Info** web site provides information, both botanical and horticultural, on the angiosperm family Malvaceae *sensu* APG (which includes the traditional Bombacaceae and much of the traditional Sterculiaceae (± Byttneriaceae) and Tiliaceae), together with a little material on related families in the order Malvales and of general botanical content. The traditional Malvaceae *sensu strictu* consists of the mallows, abutilons, cotton, hibiscuses and related plants; the extended family Malvaceae *sensu* APG also contains baobabs, balsa, kapok, kola, cacao, limes (lindens), durians and a wide variety of other plants.



Helicteres isora is a small woody shrub up to 2 metres high growing in coastal monsoonal vine thickets. Alternative broad leaves are dark green atop paler and hairy beneath. Pale orange flowers are tubular with protruding stylus. A coarse woody capsule contains seeds; characteristically spiral as shown above. This is a pan tropical species with potential medicinal uses including treatment of diabetes and elevated lipids.

Photographs of *Helicteres isora* by Ian Cowie from

<http://www.malvaceae.info/Genera/Helicteres/gallery.html>

**~ NEXT MEETING THURSDAY 16TH FEBRUARY ~
~ LOU ELLIOTT ~
“Savannah Grasses”**

Lou Elliott, from Charles Darwin University will talk about his work on savanna grasses in the greater Darwin region and tree/herb dynamics in response to fire.

**SENDER: TOP END NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
PO BOX 135 PALMERSTON
NT 0831**

TO:

**~ SUBSCRIPTION FORM ~
~ MEMBERSHIP DUE 1 JULY 2006~**

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