



President: Dave Liddle 8945 6809
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Publicity: Pat Rasmussen 8983 2788
Publications: Grace Matarazzo 8941 7379
Librarian: Sally Jacka 8988 5654
Public Officer: Geoff Gaskell 8945 5825
General Committee Members
Phil Hickey 0408821323
Sean Bellairs 8945 0873

PO BOX 135 PALMERSTON NT 0831
<http://tenpsnt.tripod.com>

~ NOVEMBER 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 College, on the corner of Amy Johnson and McMillan Drives.

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

~ NEXT MEETING AGM THURSDAY 16TH NOVEMBER ~

“Daniel Banfai”

Daniel is with the School for Environmental Research at the Charles Darwin University. He will be talking about “Changes in Rainforest Boundaries” of the Top End.

~ FIELD TRIP- SUNDAY 19TH NOVEMBER ~

“Greening Australia Nursery”

Meet at 0830 at the new Greening Australia Nursery located at the very end of Thorak Rd. Thorak Road is located past Knuckeyes Lagoon on the Stuart Hwy.

~ OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS ~

~Coolalinga Plant Sale Saturday 9th December~

TENPS will be selling plants at the Coolalinga Markets from 8am to 1pm.
See attached flyer inside.

~Christmas Party 3rd December Berry Springs~

Meet at Picnic area 12 midday, bring a plate to share.

~ Nervila Peltata ~

We will be counting **Nervila Peltata** at Charles Darwin National Park again, get in touch with Dave or watch this space if you would like to be involved.

Are you a financial member of TENPS? Please check all subs were due in July.

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Art and science combine for wild rice conservation

Renowned Japanese artist Mr Mitsuaki Tanabe has created a series of wild rice sculptures on granite rocks near the Mary River floodplain. The sculptures depict the awns and grain of the native Australian rice species, *Oryza meridionalis*. Since 1992 Mr Tanabe has been campaigning for the conservation of native wild rice and its wetland habitats. Mr Tanabe believes that the natural populations of wild rice in the tropics must be conserved so that the human race can survive into the next century. He uses his art to promote awareness of the need to preserve the habitat of wild rice. The populations of native wild rice that occur on the floodplains of the Northern Territory are of international significance. They are some of the largest populations left in the world and are genetically pure and not contaminated by hybridisation with cultivated rice.

Wild rices are also of environmental importance as they are a key food plant for Magpie Geese and other animals of the floodplains. Charles Darwin University researchers, Penny Wurm, Sean Bellairs and Naomi Rea, have been investigating the seed biology of the native rices and the impact of

introduced wetland weeds on recruitment of rice plants. CDU funded this project to investigate how to restore wild rice to wetland areas where it has been displaced by introduced grasses such as para grass. NT Parks and Wildlife and Parks Australia North staff provided enthusiastic support in locating the wild rice populations, describing the history of weed invasion and provided vital logistical assistance.

Recently the Japanese Wild Rice Club visited the NT with the aims to increase understanding of Australian native rices and to develop collaborative research projects. The four native rice species in northern Australia could provide significant genetic resource for improving the disease resistance and quality of cultivated rices.

Wild rice plants are generally overlooked by the thousands of tourists and locals who drive through the wetlands to Jabiru and Kakadu but they could be one of the Northern Territory's most important biological resources.

Sean Bellairs



One of the native rice sculptures, showing the husk and awn of the seed.



Sculptor Mr Mitsuaki Tanabe with TENPS member Sean Bellairs and native rice researcher Penny Wurm.

Top End Native Plants participated in **Knuckey Lagoon's Recreation Reserve 10th Birthday Party** on the 10th October. There was a lot of interest in our display, including the member for Nelson, Gerry Wood, pictured far left in the photo below with our TENPS member Sally Jacka and the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, Marion Scrymgour and the Secretary of the Reserve, Adina Poole



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~Aqua Green August field trip~

In August a few members made a trip to Dave Wilson's Aqua Green aquatic plant nursery. Apologies to any of you who were unaware of the event and would have liked to attend. We had too short notice to put it in the newsletter. I'm sure Dave won't mind hosting us again some time next year if members are interested.

Dave has an enormous variety of aquatic plants, many of which are Top End natives. He also has a wealth of information on how to look after them and is quite open with sharing his methods. He has a website:

www.aquagreen.com.au where you can get information on techniques and plant, fish and frog species. He gave us a rundown of the things to consider if you want a healthy aquatic system. The main points are:

(1) Controlling chemical composition of the water

He uses potassium bicarbonate as a hardness buffer - reduces variation in the pH of the water. Adds CO₂ to circulating water - increases acidity but also needed for plant growth. Perfect pH for aquatic plants is 6.8. With the potassium bicarbonate and dolomite lime he provides the main macro-nutrients: potassium, calcium and magnesium.

Measuring water quality - can use a Hardness Test Kit from Aquasonic or Pool shops, which measures:

Hardness - amount of calcium and magnesium (eg. about 40 ppm)
Alkalinity (or carbonate hardness) eg. 60 ppm
pH eg. 6.8 (Add CO₂ if need to decrease)

(2) Controlling temperature - water temperature must be kept up in the dry season. His tanks have a combined volume of 80,000 litres and he heats the water by

running a small pump through 2.7km of 19mm poly pipe (covered with black plastic). This can raise the water temperature from 22 deg to 30 deg in 6 hours.

(3) Fertilizing aquatic plants. Dave has been using toad fertilizer with obvious success. He adds fertilizer through vertical standing pipes that stand above the water level and are pushed into underwater dirt boxes with Atlantis drainage cell. The dirt is covered with river sand and shade cloth to stop it muddying the water.

A more simple method is to place a monsoon tablet in the pot, which water lilies do thrive on, but if you have a lot in your system, you may over fertilize. Too high nutrient content can cause algal problems.

(4) Potting mix - Dave uses:

1 part shell grit;
2 parts dry cow manure;
4 parts dirt, and
a cover of a layer of river sand to prevent the finer particles escaping and muddying the water.

Greg Beresford

It's not as complicated as it may sound, and it is well worthwhile. We have found that adding aquatic features, both large and small, has transformed our garden, making it more tranquil and attracting a greater variety of birds, lizards and frogs. We have numerous small ponds made from such things as rubbish bin lids and a large pond lined with black acrylic. The pictures here show just a few of the Top End native aquatic plants in our garden.

Sally Jacka



The yellow flowers at the top right are *Ludwigia octovalvus*, above left is *Ottelia alismoides* and right is *Nymphoides indica* and *Maidenia rubra*.

Flueggea virosa



Although often a scraggly plant, *Flueggea virosa* is beautiful at this time of the year with new bright leaves and, on the male plants, lime-green flowers.



So many plants look wonderful in the build-up. Sorry I am unable to rotate this Melastoma, fruit and flower.

Apparently the fruit is edible hence Melastoma from the Greek words used in botanical Latin melas (black) and stoma (mouth or opening).

All above photo's supplied by Sally Jacka.

**Prepare for the wet, get your native plants
now!**

Plant Sale



Where: Coolalinga, out the front of
Woolworths

When: Saturday 9th December 2006

Time: 8am-12pm

Top End Native Plant Society Incorporated

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

Annual General Meeting Agenda

**To be held at 7.30pm on Thursday 16 November 2006
at the Senior Study Centre of Marrara Christian College,
corner of McMillans Road and Amy Johnson Avenue, Marrara.**

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Attendance and Quorum**
- 3. Apologies**
- 4. Minutes of Previous AGM**
- 5. Committee Report**
- 6. Presentation of Financial Statements**
- 7. Declaration of Committee positions vacant and election of new Committee**
 - 7.1 President**
 - 7.2 Vice-President**
 - 7.3 Secretary**
 - 7.4 Treasurer**
 - 7.5 Publicity Officer**
 - 7.6 Publications Officer**
 - 7.7 Librarian**
 - 7.8 two committee members**
- 8. Election of Public Officer**
- 9. Other Business**
- 10. Meeting close**

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

TO:

**~SUBSCRIPTION FORM MEMBERSHIP DUE 1 JULY 2006~
TOP END NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
PO BOX 135 PALMERSTON NT 0831**

Please accept my subscription/renewal for membership of the Top End Native Plant Society

My details are as follows:

Name/s (Please print all family member names)

Postal Address Post Code

Telephone (work) (home)

Email address

Newsletters are now available by email (Acrobat Reader required to read files).
If you would like your newsletter sent by email please tick the box.

Payment Enclosed \$..... (\$20.00 per member/family, \$15.00 unwaged)

Signature Date:/...../.....

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