

August 2017

# Village Eco News

A publication of Bangalow Land and Rivercare.

Welcome to Village Eco News. For more information about how you can subscribe or contribute see page 4

## First Impressions

By Val Rainthorpe

A couple of decades ago people were shocked to see hundreds of fish floating dead on the surface of the Byron Creek as it flowed through Bangalow. They asked the experts what to do to prevent the horror ever happening again.

Apparently algal bloom was the cause and the solution was to remove weed species and to plant natives to filter the water and hold the creek banks firm.

People banded together to make it happen. They started the Bangalow Land and Rivercare Group (Landcare). Landcare and the Byron Creek have been key to my happy experience of Bangalow.

I left Brisbane for Bangalow about 18 months ago wondering if I'd made the right decision. It felt as if I was stepping off the edge of a cliff hoping I could fly - or someone would catch me.

My son and grandchildren were in this area but I had no friends here. Straight away I was surprised by the sweetness of the air and the friendliness of my neighbours.

Small villages aren't noted for their openness to newcomers so it was an unexpectedly good first impression. In the last couple of decades many people searching for a different approach to life have moved here from cities.

So, perhaps, having experienced starting a new life, they kindly reach out to support others when they arrive.

In the first days, weeks and months I walked everywhere, partly to lose my city flab and partly to find a new home. I was thrilled to discover Byron Creek, bringing the countryside through the village.

People were walking their dogs and throwing sticks into the stream for them. Cattle were grazing nearby. The birds were all around, fish swimming in the stream and apparently platypus too! I'd wanted to live in the countryside and in a community and here was this sparkling creek bringing the two together.

Then in April 2016 Landcare along with All Souls' Church organised a planting day. What better way to express my feelings about the creek and the community than to join in?



Val at the All Souls Planting *photo Ken Dorey*

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### Landcare Working Bee

Our team of friendly volunteers work every Saturday morning, weather permitting from 8.30am to 10.30am rotating through the various sites around Bangalow. All welcome.



## All Souls, Landcare Community Planting Day



It was fun - mums and dads guiding toddlers with their trowels, elderly folk teetering on rickety deck chairs to bend forward to plant, all ages working together for a few minutes or for many hours to plant over three thousand shrubs and trees.

The trees have survived immersion in the floods and are looking good. They are still growing well largely through the efforts of Landcare, re-mulching after the floods, weeding and replanting. Soon there will be mature native woodland by the creek for everyone to enjoy.

Similar rejuvenation work has transformed the path by the Bangalow Sports Field and by the Bangalow Weir, in fact all along the creek as it meanders through the village. Things like this don't just happen. They demand effort, drive and organisation.

Each Saturday morning Landcare visit a section of the creek to weed and replant. This ensures the water is healthy and free flowing, and keeps a wide strip of native bush weaving through the village for everyone to enjoy.

Without that work Bangalow would lose some of its charm. The creek would be overgrown with weeds spreading out of and into nearby gardens. It would be sluggish, often blocked completely and in danger of another fish kill.

Joining Landcare seemed a great way to contribute to this beautiful place. The first Saturday morning people welcomed me in the usual Bangalow friendly style, despite my ignorance and lack of skills. I now go whenever I can. It's laid back and relaxed. There's no pressure.

Any help, however short a time or intermittent the attendance, is gratefully received.

I enjoy the work and the chat! I'm learning to distinguish between weeds and native plants and take great pleasure in the good company and in the progress we're making. But it's a bit shocking that so many of us are getting on a bit. We need new blood.



WE NEED **YOUR** HELP!

### **Plant of the Month** **Native Holly Fuchsia** *Graptophyllum ilicifolium*

The Holly Fuchsia, shown below, is an erect shrub that grows to 2.5 metres with stiff holly like leaves and deep red tubular flowers. Once rare it is now available commercially. Suitable for most gardens the Holly Fuchsia can be trimmed to suit any situation and can be grown in a pot. It likes a warm place in the garden with some shade and a well drained soil. *Dawn Lotty*







## The Cost of Lithium Batteries by Dawn Lotty

Just when we thought we were doing the right thing by the environment by embracing the electric car we learn that the manufacture of the lithium batteries used to power these vehicles is leading to a dramatic decline in the number of Flamingoes especially in Chile, South America.

Lithium, a silver white metal is formed from water leaching down from the Andes mountains over thousands of years and settling at the bottom of lagoons across the valley. This is where Flamingoes feed and breed.

The lithium mining process extracts brine from these lagoons (by one company at 1500 litres a second) then decanting the brine into pools where it evaporates. The mineral is then harvested. The result is the shrinking or drying up of the lagoons.

As a result Flamingo numbers are down 28% from 2014 while lithium battery demand is expected to increase by 40% over the next 10 years. Locals are hoping that the parliamentary commission set up this year to address the situation may draw attention world wide to the plight of the Flamingoes although a solution to the problem may be problematic in the face of mining companies assertion that their monitoring systems 'show little or no impact'.

## Bangalow Landcare & Rivercare AGM

Held on 3 June the following Officials were elected;

**President:** Noelene Plummer

**Vice President:** Anne Martin

**Secretary:** Liz Gander

**Assist Secretary & Public Officer:** Dawn Lotty

**Treasurer:** Robert Lotty

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Mark Free for his years of service as Treasurer.

## The Little Things

By Liz Gander

Cotton buds are commonly used in a variety of ways including first aid, cosmetic application, cleaning and arts and crafts and we are all guilty and told about putting things in our ears.

This is one more '30 second item' that will haunt the earth for thousands of years but it does not need to be the case.

If you must use cotton buds then please only purchase the ones made with pressed cardboard or bamboo stems. Some brands available are *Organyc* and *Go Bamboo*, see below, and available from health food stores

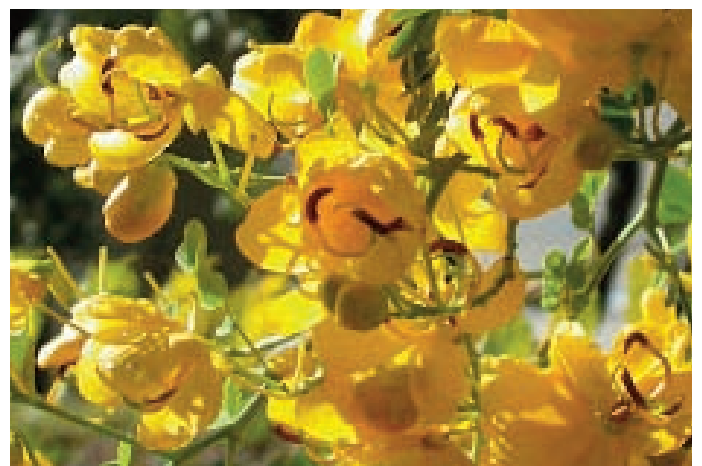


## Weed of the Month Winter Cassia

*Senna pendula var glabrata*

This bright yellow flowering scrub, shown below, is normally 3 metres high but can invade and compete with native plants up to 5 metres high in a range of rainforests, wet sclerophyll forest, woodland and coastal heathlands.

The seeds are disbursed by water, ants, birds and rodents. Eradication is by hand pulling seedlings or by cutting, scraping and painting stumps with an approved herbicide. *Weeds of Byron Shire*



## One For The Girls

By Liz Gander

Seriously, unless you are a very enlightened male then look away now!

I want to bring to light a product that is not new but is certainly new to me and my family. My daughter recently started singing the praises of the menstrual cup, I'd never heard of it. What has this to do with the environment? Simple, it is reusable for up to 10 years and takes out of landfill countless tonnes of disposable feminine sanitary products.

When you stop and think about it 50% of the world's population menstruates, the number of sanitary napkins, tampons and applicators are dumped into landfills every year must be in the billions.

When wrapped in plastic bags, feminine hygiene waste can take centuries to biodegrade. The average woman uses over 11,000 tampons over her lifetime, leaving behind residue far beyond her lifespan.

This colossal waste burden however, isn't the only ecological impact of disposable feminine hygiene products. 'A Life Cycle Assessment of Tampons' conducted by the *Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm*, found that the largest impact on global warming was caused by the processing of LDPE (low-density polyethylene, a thermoplastic made from monomer ethylene) used in tampon applicators as well as in the plastic back strip of sanitary napkins requiring a high amount of fossil fuel generated energy.

A year's worth of typical feminine hygiene product leaves a carbon footprint of 5,3kg CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents.

The cup has actually been around since the 1860's and has had several variants but it took the actress Leona Chalmers to redesign and patent it in 1937. The early models were made from latex but today they are mostly made from medical grade silicone. It's a soft cap that fits over the cervix which collects rather than absorbs the liquid and needs only changing

twice a day and from all reports very comfortable.

Another plus is that they eliminate the threat of *Toxic Shock Syndrome* as well as the angst of paying the unfair female GST. Wish I'd have known about these 40 years ago, at least my girls do now.

But wait, there's more! Spare a thought for girls in third world countries who cannot afford to buy sanitary pads. There is considerable stigma and embarrassment attached to this time of month and girls are missing much of the school year because they won't attend during their cycle.

We can help these girls by supporting the *Femme International Project* to supply a *Femme Kit* along with the appropriate hygiene advice and really change their lives for the better.

<https://www.femmeinternational.org/our-work/>



### Village Eco News

Our aim is to inform, interest, amuse and educate our readers on all things environmental. We welcome you to submit your contributions or to subscribe to this free Newsletter send your name and email address to:

[bangalowlandcare@gmail.com](mailto:bangalowlandcare@gmail.com)

Please pass this publication on to your family and friends. Receiving your Newsletter online will help to save the environment we work to preserve.

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