

# Hamilton Island

A gem of the Queensland tourism industry, Hamilton Island has long been a favoured destination for the rich, the romantic, business conferences and family retreats. Situated on the edge of the Great Barrier Reef, the island sports a range of landscaped hotels, villas and holiday homes; an array of restaurants and entertainment venues; and numerous activities spanning water sports, golf and bush walking.

Many of the gardens still reflect the early plant combinations and designs of the Keith Williams era but are now being updated with more contemporary aesthetics and plant selections under the guidance of current owners Ian and Sandy Oatley.

Foliage colour is one of the key horticultural visuals noted on the Island. Dominant plants include the various cultivars of Croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*), Cordyline (*Cordyline fruticosa*), Caricature Plant (*Graptophyllum pictum*), Coleus (*Plectranthus scutellarioides*), Beefsteak Plant (*Acalypha wilkesiana*), Variegated Dwarf Umbrella Tree (*Schefflera arboricola*), Variegated Spider Lily (*Hymenocallis caribaea* 'Variegata') and Variegated Star Jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides* 'Tricolor'), to mention but a few.

The Pink Malay Ixora (*Ixora* 'Pink Malay'), has proven to be one of the most effective wind buffers and privacy screens and is stunning when in full bloom. When allowed to grow into its natural form with a light pruning it provides an ideal informal hedge.





Local vegetation has been retained wherever possible across the various resorts and public areas to retain a 'sense of place' and to give guests a sense of the island's natural beauty. Featured native vegetation includes Barringtonia Tree (*Barringtonia asiatica*), Native Wisteria Tree (*Millettia pinnata* syn. *Pongamia pinnata*), Western Boobialla (*Myoporum montanum*), Screw Pine (*Pandanus tectorius*), Pink Phyllanthus (*Phyllanthus cuscutiflorus*) and various Gum Trees (*Eucalyptus* and *Corymbia* spp.) and Tea-trees (*Melaleuca* species).

The proverbial Coconut Palms (*Cocos nucifera*) sway beside sandy beaches, along roadways and pathways but are de-nutted regularly for safety reasons.

The island is relatively self sustaining as a garden. All irrigation uses recycled water and prunings are composted or provide propagation material for the island's nursery. Quarantine is taken rather seriously with restrictions on new plants being introduced onto the island. Even the landscape soils are developed from soil from earthworks and added compost.

With seasonal tropical rainfall and sandy soils, granular fertilisers are used with added iron chelates to green up the lawns.

In addition to the gardens, garden staff is also responsible for indoor plant maintenance and replacements, stocked from the island's onsite nursery.

Qualia is the luxury accommodation district on the Island. Pavilions are nestled into gardens to provide intimate privacy and enhanced with plantings of 'Cascade' Lillipillies (*Syzygium* 'Cascade'), a range of ornamental gingers, heliconias, hibiscus along with gum trees and paperbarks, while retaining views to the ocean.

Other accommodation options are also well landscaped to reinforce the tropical holiday experience and feature lush foliage, vibrant tropical flowers and shade trees.

Dent Island Golf Course opened in August 2009 and is set amongst natural bushland and island wildlife. Taking three years to construct with minimal environmental impact, the 18-hole Peter Thomson designed course also has approximately 18 kilometres of buggy tracks – a great way to traverse this small island and appreciate the spectacular panoramic views.

Hamilton Island is one of those holiday destinations you can visit to relax and unwind. Take the time to enjoy the gardens that make this resort what it is – a tropical retreat. ●

Editor Paul Plant was guest of Hamilton Island for this feature in 2010 and stayed at the Reef View Hotel. [www.hamiltonisland.com.au](http://www.hamiltonisland.com.au)

