

**NEW!! For all tropical, subtropical and warm climate gardens**

**ISSUE 3**  
QUARTERLY

# *sub*Tropical Gardening

*and landscaping in warm climates*



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# Welcome

## FROM THE EDITOR...

Drought conditions in the South East of Queensland and Cyclone Larry in the tropical north have us all wishing the best for everyone affected. It also reminds us how sensitive humans and gardens are to the forces of nature – something we need to remember for the future.

This issue we take a look at the stunningly tropical allamandas and cannas, endemic versus native plants and of course all our featured plants and regular segments.

Our garden tours through private gardens provide inspiration even for a novice. Our lifestyle has created a space that merges house and garden into one large liveable zone furnished with plants. Don't forget to check out our website that has additional information on some of these gardens.

When speaking to a few nurserymen I was reminded that many gardeners stop doing anything in the garden over 'winter'. As a result it is highly recommended that everyone reads the MYTH BUSTING section in this issue...we may all need to change our activities in the future.

Weeds continue to be a topic of discussion amongst horticulturists, nursery people, plant collectors, government and environmental groups. What is a weed in one area may not be a weed in another and hence a national approach that creates a blanket ban on many plants is poorly thought out and is arguably bad advice by authorities. The STG team will endeavour to highlight those plants we feel are weeds.

The STG Team wish to thank everyone for all the compliments we have received regarding this magazine. We also wish to acknowledge our advertisers for without them this publication may not have been printed. Please support them and their products as a sign of thanks.

Happy reading!



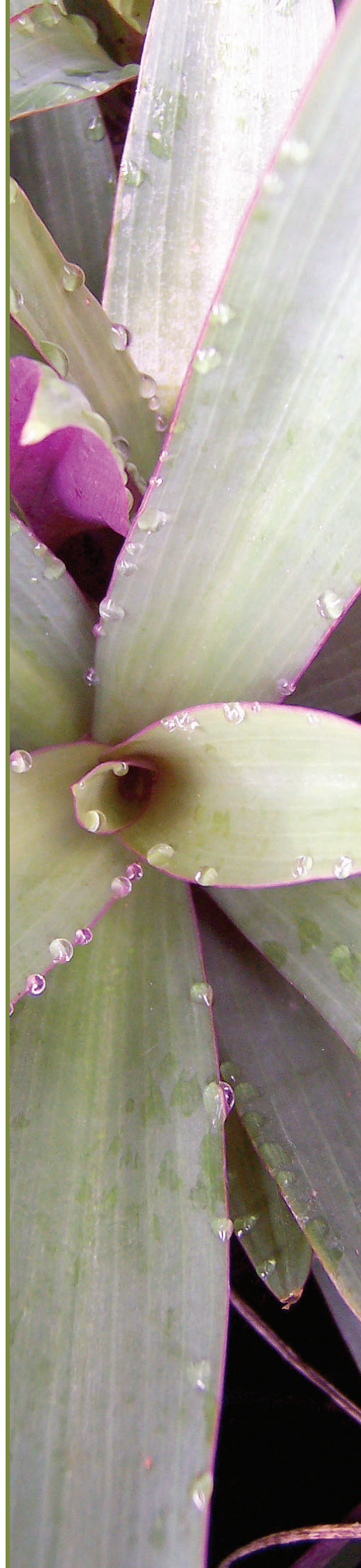
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# Myth Busting!

## Winter gardening in the tropics and subtropics

### Myth:

No one gardens in winter.

**FALSE** – If you live in the tropics and do not garden during the winter, you will end up with a jungle within a few weeks. All gardens need a bit of care during all seasons.

### Myth:

Clean your garden tools and store them for winter.

**FALSE** – Where do you live? Toronto or Townsville? Your tools should always be looked after, 365 days of the year, ready for when you may need to use them.

### Myth:

Plants do not grow in winter.

**FALSE** – Look around and you will see plants throughout the tropics, subtropics and warm temperate climates still flowering and putting on fresh growth. Fruit and vegetable gardens are still in production. There are some districts that get frosts in the subtropics, so consider your local conditions.

### Myth:

Don't buy plants sourced from tropical areas in the middle of winter to plant in the ground if you live in a cooler climate.

**TRUE** – Wait until the weather warms up before planting warmth loving species if you live in a cooler climate.

### Myth:

Only buy plants in spring as the plants will establish better.

**FALSE** – By spring you have missed the best time to establish the plants. Get them into the ground or pot them up, before spring/summer heat desiccates the soil and slows growth.



### Myth:

Tropical plants are sensitive to frost.

**TRUE** – Many plants sold in nurseries come from the tropics and may be sensitive to your local outdoor conditions. Ask your garden centre if they source stock from a local grower – these plants may be tougher in your conditions.

### Myth:

It's too cold in winter to create a landscape.

**FALSE** – Winter is one of the best times to plan and create your landscape. Imagine inviting friends over, anytime of the year to enjoy alfresco dining in your backyard – winter, spring, summer or autumn.

# Climbers

## *Quisqualis indica*

Family: COMBRETACEAE

Common name: Rangoon Creeper

The Rangoon Creeper is a highly desirable climber for the tropics, subtropics and warm temperate climates. *Quisqualis indica* is grown all over the world, from the ancient temples of Thailand to the sheltered gardens of Sydney.

This plant is native to parts of South East Asia.

Rangoon Creeper has large heads of multiple small flowers capable of blooming over late summer and autumn. Young blossoms start off white, change to pink, then mature to an orange-red. The flowers are delicately scented, but the scent is more noticeable during the evening.

As well as the original species, a double form is commonly grown in Thailand (pictured below). A white cultivar named 'Jessies's Star' will be released late 2006 – it was discovered as a seedling in Brisbane.



© Anton van der Schans

### Best growing conditions:

- moist soil rich in organic matter
- supply a thick layer of mulch
- water during periods of drought
- full sun to partial shade
- fertilise each year to achieve maximum flowering.

### Landscape use

Provide a strong support to assist climbing such as an arbour, arch or upright pole.

Can look attractive draping over old buildings.

Can be grown in pots in small gardens.

Pruning will be needed each year to control growth.



© Kristen Mathews

# PLACES TO BE...

## Flecker Botanic Gardens

Flecker Botanic Gardens and Botanic Reserves in Cairns, Queensland are the only Botanic Gardens in Australia's Wet Tropics.

The collection consists of tropical rainforest plants from both native and exotic origins, a fernery, orchid house, aboriginal plant use section, Australia's Gondwanan Inheritance Garden as well as palms, heliconias, gingers, aroids, bamboo, tropical fruits, flowering trees, shrubs and vines.

The Gardens, including the Rainforest Boardwalk and Centenary Lakes, cover an area of approximately 38 hectares at Edge Hill in Cairns. The Centenary Lakes consist of both a Freshwater and a Saltwater lake split by a mangrove lined Saltwater creek. The lakes have a large population of migratory and resident birdlife.

A boardwalk connects the Botanic reserves to the Botanic Gardens and traverses through a remnant sample of the original Lowland Swamp Rainforest that was once common on the Cairns coastal plains and is of significant conservation status.

The gardens also co-manages the adjoining Mt Whitfield Conservation Park (an area of approximately 300 hectares) with the Department of Environment and Heritage and offers walkers a choice of two trails that take them through rainforest, sclerophyll forests and open grasslands.

**Entry Free. Open 7.30am to 5.30pm.**

**Weekdays and 8.30am to 5.30pm Weekends and public holidays.**



# Managing your lawn in Times of Drought

## – Part 2

As a follow-on from Issue 2 Cynthia Carson continues her topic...



Cynthia Carson

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## Performance Expectations

During drought you can not expect to have a lush, green lawn.

The objective for lawns under drought conditions should be to maintain sufficient living top growth and root systems to hold soil in place. Under these conditions you need to accept that some varieties of grass will shut-down and become straw-coloured or start to purple. When the rain does arrive, however, it is then a quick path to re-greening and improved vigour.

It can be tempting to re-design gardens to replace turf with gravel or paving, however, the consequence of this is reduced flexibility in how this open space may be used, the additional build up of reflected summer heat and absence of all the attributes associated with having a living lawn.

When the rain does arrive, however,, it is then a quick path to re-greening and improved vigour.



## Turf Species and Varieties

Along the east coast of Queensland, both green and blue couch have demonstrated drought tolerance over a sustained period. There is a number of cultivated varieties (cultivars) of green couch (*Cynodon dactylon*) and blue couch (*Digitaria didactyla*) on the market. Of the green couches, the older cultivars, 'Wintergreen' and 'Greenlees Park', are still widely used, despite the introduction of a number of more specialised new releases. Blue couch is widely naturalised over much of Queensland and is sold as common Queensland blue, 'Aussibleu' and 'Tropika'.

Under dry conditions the couches wilt and then tend to become straw-like. Their root systems are robust and generally survive to produce a rapid greening response as soon as water becomes available.

Sales of newer species like the buffalo grasses (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*), zoysia grasses (such as *Zoysia japonica*) and seashore paspalum (*Paspalum vaginatum*) are increasing. Independent research is currently underway at the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries to study the drought tolerance of the buffalo grasses.