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ISSUE 27 – QUARTERLY

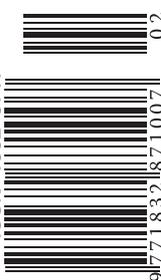
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# subTropical Gardening

BLUE HIPPEASTRUMS  
BUTTERFLY PLANTS  
GARDEN CALENDAR  
LANDSCAPE ART-ITECTURE  
NATIVE WILD CURRANTS

**local advice for  
local gardeners**

ISSN 1832-8717



**WILDLIFE**  
– koalas



**GARDENS**  
– Sydney + Ipswich



**EDIBLES**  
– Vietnamese vegies



**FRAGRANT PLANTS**  
– flowers + foliage

# PROBLEM SOLVER

**B**roccoli & Cauliflower. Love your magazine, I find it full of helpful ideas and hints. I do have a problem, one that has plagued me for over ten years now. How do you successfully grow broccoli and cauliflower without them bolting to flower before they have a decent head on them?

We live by the water in Brisbane and eat plenty of these two vegetables, but it seems to be the only two that we can't grow. The plants form a very small head, not even enough for a meal to feed three, then they bolt to flower. Hubby keeps telling me to give up, but with cauliflower nearly \$5 for a small one, no way. Can you please help?

Jo – Manly, QLD

*Ed: Good news Jo. Claire Bickle has written an article on brassicas with recommendations on how to successfully grow these plants in our local climate. Check out pages 62-63.*

*Generally, it's about selecting the right cultivars and planting at the right time of year.*

**C**aterpillar. Can you please identify these little critters for me? I had a few last year but this year they are back in huge numbers and have eaten all my Zephyranthes to the ground and I think they could also be eating the bulbs as there seems to be white mushy substance left at soil level. They have now moved on to other plants. I don't want to harm them if they are butterfly caterpillars but I would like some plants left to admire.

Many thanks for a wonderful magazine. I have never missed a copy.

Del – Bray Park, QLD

*Ed: Hi Del, I have same problem here at home. This is Brithys crini, commonly called the lily borer, a troublesome caterpillar that also attacks Amaryllis, Clivia, Crinum, Hippeastrum, Hymenocallis, Lycoris and Pancratium. I have also seen it on Habranthus. The moths are unattractive.*

*If you need to use a chemical, use one registered for caterpillars and grubs.*

*Alternatively, the safe biological method involves:*

- 1. Hand pick/squash caterpillars*
- 2. Drench soil in weak molasses mix*
- 3. Spray remaining grubs with spinosad or pyrethrum.*

**F**rangipani. My 10 year old Frangipani tree just fell over last night. Its stem seems to have simply broken just below the soil surface, without looking rotten. There are no roots attached to it at all. As you are aware we had a lot of rain recently at the Gold Coast, but it is not that the soggy soil has given way, as no soil has been moved or been lifted. The good nutrient rich top soil here at Hope Island is only 30cm deep but below that there is impenetrable marine clay. What do you think is the cause for this sudden event?

Peter – QLD, via STG Community forum

*Ed: I have seen cases where medium aged small trees with large heavy canopies have fallen over in wet conditions due to the imbalance in top growth (mass of branches, leaves and water) being too much for the existing root structure to hold upright – this has actually happened at my place with some native rainforest species. This frangipani seems to have just snapped off below ground level and toppled over.*

*The best action here is to replant the broken 'tree' or cut off a large branch and treat it like massive cutting. Allow the base to heal over then plant it back into the ground while providing a secure support to keep it upright.*

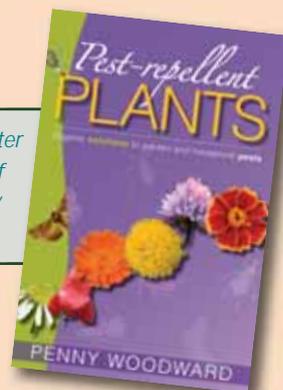


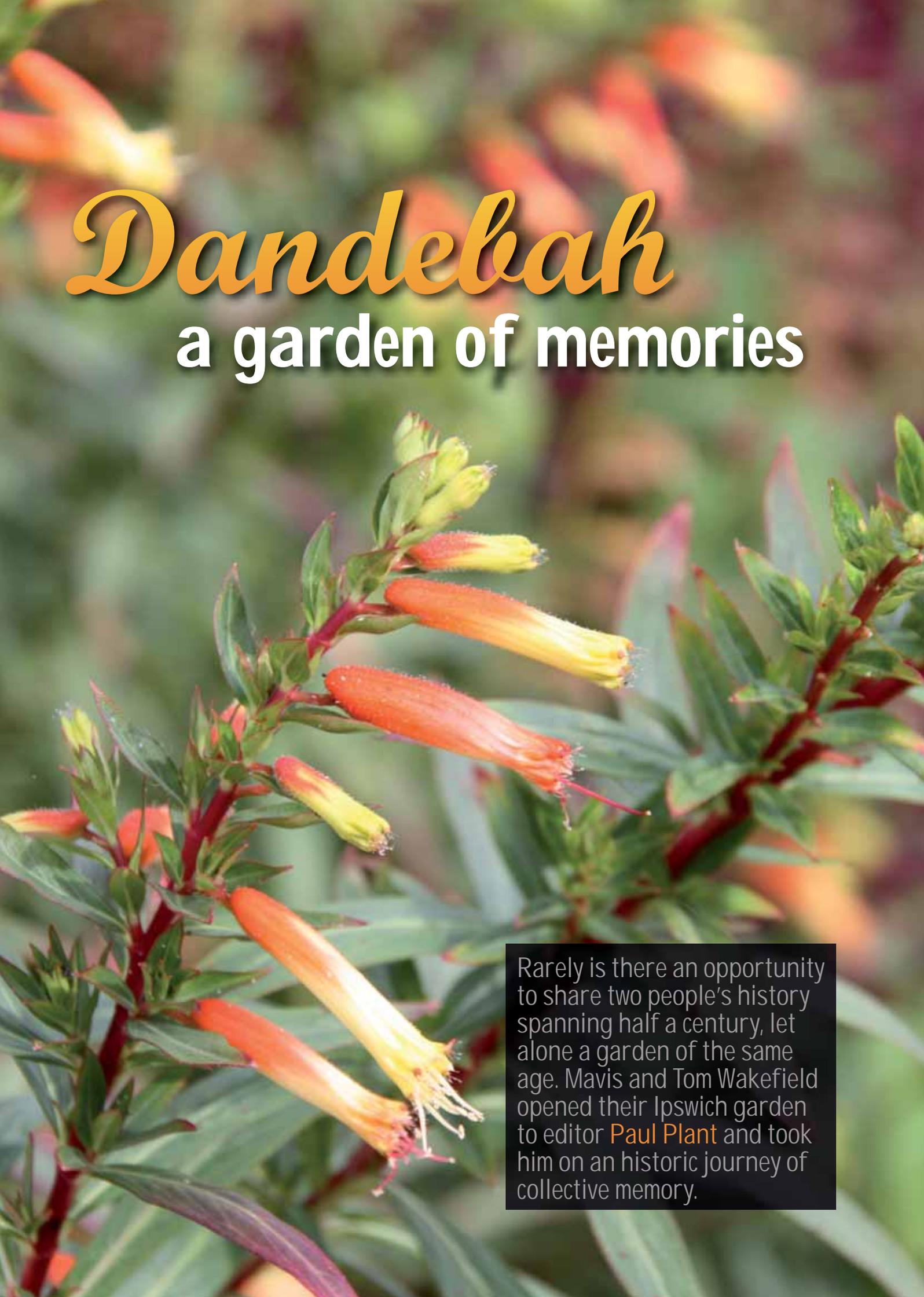
**P**alm. I have just noticed my Palm has shrivelled up fronds. Do you know what caused it and can it be saved?

Liz – Mackay, QLD

*Ed: Hello Liz. Our palm expert Grant Larkin believes this is caused by a serious infection of mealy bugs or a trace element deficiency. He has seen foxtail palms grow out of this damage and recover. I would recommend you nurture the plant along with some organic fertiliser and a dose of seaweed solution. The palm is too tall to apply an insecticide but if you feel it is necessary, please contact a qualified horticulturist or arborist.*

**WINNER** – for your letter you have won a copy of 'Pest-Repellent Plants' by Penny Woodward.





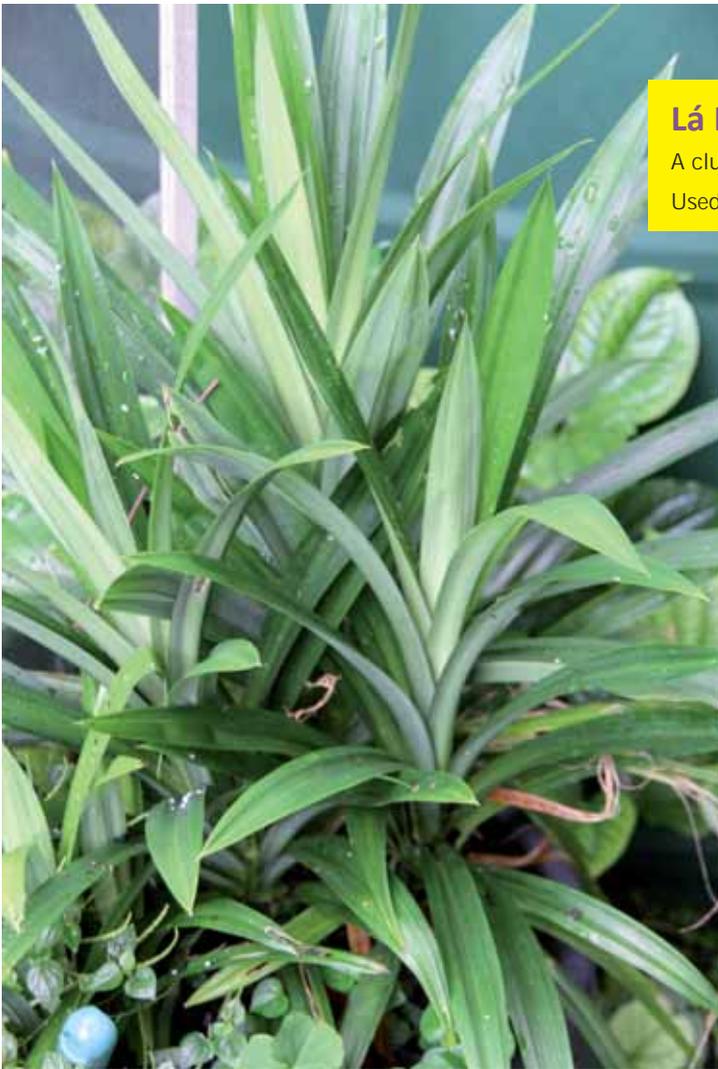
# *Dandelbark*

## a garden of memories

Rarely is there an opportunity to share two people's history spanning half a century, let alone a garden of the same age. Mavis and Tom Wakefield opened their Ipswich garden to editor **Paul Plant** and took him on an historic journey of collective memory.

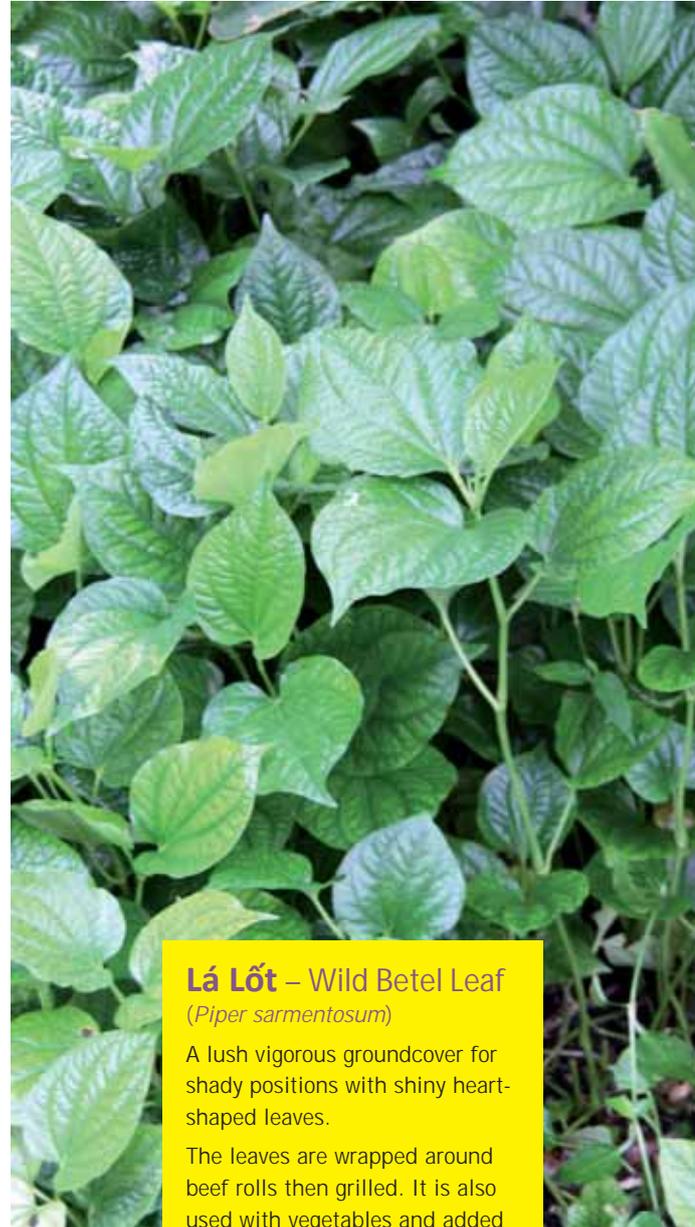


WINTER  
FRAGRANT  
PLANTS



**Lá Dứa** – Pandan (*Pandanus amaryllifolius*)

A clumping plant with dark green strappy leaves.  
Used as a flavouring for cakes and rice.



**Lá Lốt** – Wild Betel Leaf (*Piper sarmentosum*)

A lush vigorous groundcover for shady positions with shiny heart-shaped leaves.

The leaves are wrapped around beef rolls then grilled. It is also used with vegetables and added to other meals.



**Mồng Tơi** – Malabar Spinach (*Basella alba*)

A vigorous climbing plant with broad fleshy dark green leaves and black berries.

The leaves of this plant are used in sweet and sour soups. They also act as a thickener in soups. The berries are used as a red food colouring.

# OKINAWA SPINACH

## *Gynura bicolor* syn. *Cacalia bicolor*

By Arno King

01

01 | Plants for sale at a garden centre.

02 | At market - stems make great cuttings.

**O**kinawa Spinach is also known as Red Vegetable, Hung-tsoi (China), Hong-keng-cai (Taiwan) or Kinjiso, Handama and Suizenjigusa (Japan), is an attractive perennial vegetable.

*Gynura bicolor* is native to Southern China, Taiwan, Myanmar (Burma) and Thailand. It was introduced into Japan in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and is now a traditional autumn vegetable in the southern prefectures. The plant in cultivation, Okinawa Spinach, is a sterile clone which must be grown from cuttings and is superior in flavour to the wild form.

The narrow, dark green pointed and serrated leaves have purple undersides. The plant has a creeping growth habit. It forms a low vigorous spreading

groundcover or shrub rooting where the nodes touch the soil. The plant produces orange-yellow flowers in summer which attract butterflies but produce no viable seed.

This hardy low maintenance perennial is regarded as being one of the easiest of all vegetables to grow. It likes moisture and prefers a position in full sun to semi-shade. Organically enriched, fertile, free draining soil is recommended. It will tolerate periods of drier weather once established but regular watering is required for the continued production of sweet tender leaves.

A frost tender plant, it is best suited to tropical and subtropical areas (north of Ballina).

It may die back during winter in cooler areas, reappearing as the weather warms.

The plant is subject to few pests but is occasionally eaten by grasshoppers in the late spring and early summer months.

Readily propagated from cuttings, which are quick to establish, this is probably the fastest growing and most productive of all leafy vegetables. Use lengths 150 to 300 mm long and remove leaves. Plant across the soil with two to three nodes buried. The best time to plant is during the warmer wetter months when cuttings can be planted directly in the vegetable garden. During the cooler drier months plant cuttings in a pot of quality potting media, keep moist and place pot in a shade house or protected area of the garden until the plants are well rooted.

Plants are very ornamental and well suited to a potager or ornamental kitchen garden. »