

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

ISSUE 2

*sub*Tropical Gardening

and landscaping in warm climates



local advice for
local gardeners

RRP \$7.95 inc GST



■ WATER LOTUS
– the plant in focus



■ THREE GARDENS
FEATURED!



■ WATER SAVING TIPS
– myths and truths



■ SUBTROPICALIA
COLLECTOR

A photograph of a tropical river scene. On the right side, there is a stone wall made of large, rectangular blocks. The river water is clear and blue, reflecting the surrounding greenery. The left bank is densely forested with tall trees and lush vegetation. The text "Paradise on the banks of the barron" is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

Paradise on the banks of the barron

When Brett Carnel decided that the timber home tucked away on the forested banks of the Barron River tributary (about 20km north of Cairns) needed another lease on its already somewhat short life, he had the notion of a more useful landscape to live in.

SUWAN {garden} Bazaar {MARKETPLACE}

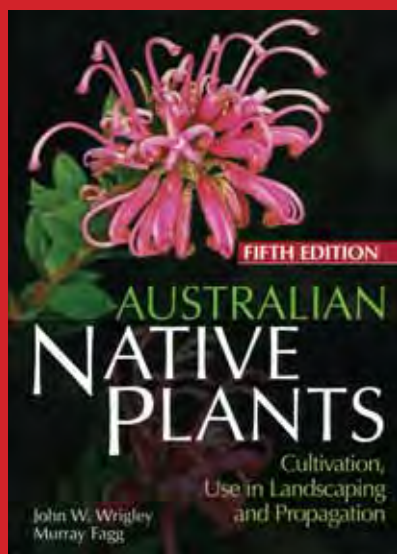


Kalanchoe beharensis

With felt-like soft hairs and silver-green foliage with light brown margins this succulent is worth looking for in your local garden centre. Try it on a balcony with bright light or in the garden for its striking foliage.

Organic Xtra

Strengthen your garden and help them survive drought periods by using organic fertilisers. Always use gloves when handling garden products.



Australian Native Plants: Cultivation, Use in Landscape and Propagation (5th Edition)

by John J Wrigley & Murray Fagg

Regarded as one of the leading authoritative books on native plants, it spans the entire country from the tropics and base of Tasmania.

5th Edition was release in 2003 yet it is still one of the most comprehensive and accurate books on the market and a valuable asset for any home gardener interested in native plants and how to grow and propagate them. It is also a excellent reference for landscape designers.

Coloured plates and line sketches mix well within the book to assist in plant identification.

The early chapters are a must to read for all plant lovers whether you like natives or not.

Publisher: Reed New Holland, 2003. RRP: \$99.95 Hard Cover

Balcony: Gardening In Small Spaces

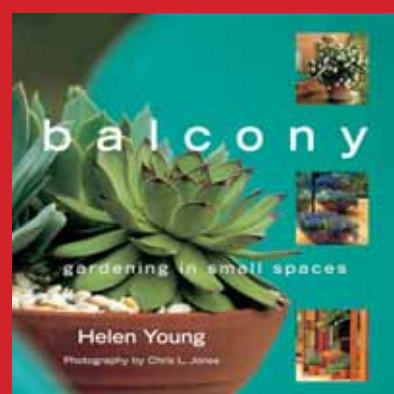
by Helen Young

Inspired by the increasing population to high density living and apartment units, this book provides a pleasant read and fabulous inspiration.

A section, albeit short, dedicated to 'tropical' gardens, is complemented with other chapters related to plants with a purpose, difficult site conditions and practical know-how for small spaces.

There is a wealth of useful tips for tropical and subtropical small-space gardeners to give this book a good eye over.

Publisher: Lothian Books, 2005. RRP: \$45.00 Hard Cover



Garden survival on rainfall only



I was told recently that I'm only one of 20% of people in South East Queensland who provide their own water. How do we all manage?! Can we have large and productive gardens which depend entirely on the local rainfall?

The answer is a resounding 'YES'!

Main: Every roof needs a water tank. A new shed provides a dedicated water supply for the blueberries and grapes, which fruit in the dry season. Head tank for future chooks. **Inset:** The extensive vegetable garden supplies all our needs. Cane mulch and plenty of organic matter in the soil keep water use down.

Flowering Trees

Amherstia nobilis

Family: CAESALPINEACEAE

Common Name: Pride of Burma

Guest Contributor



Anton van der Schans

Landscape Architect
Cairns

Proposed Family: FABACEAE (CAESALPINIOIDEAE)



Although rare and endangered within its natural habitat, the monsoonal teak forests of Myanmar (Burma), this tree is regarded as the Queen of Tropical Flowering Trees. This is due to the surreal elegance of its exquisite and unique flowers combined with its handsome foliage and the tree's structure.

It is sometimes termed 'Handkerchief Tree' in that it has limp, pendulous, new growth, which in *Amherstia* is first flushed silvery-pink, then coppery-maroon, maturing and stiffening to papery blue-green foliage, that is glaucous underleaf. Mature trees develop an informal, pyramidal, open crown up to approximately 12 metres high by 8 metres spread.

The dominant colour of the pendulous inflorescence stalk, bracts and petals is often described as red or pink, unjustly simplifying its complexity; a sensuously soft, rich, warm coral blend with splashes of white and gold. The exotic, graceful form of the flowers can inspire imaginative comparisons with orchids – even birds or insects hovering in flight.

The flowers rarely develop into pods, and the few that do set rarely contain viable seeds. Propagation is limited to marcotting of firm young branches. Local growers in Cairns report variable results with marcotts from the same tree. In apparently

identical seasons, they may take well in one year but fail in another. Trees are therefore highly priced when available.

Basic needs:

- A humid, tropical, microclimate or very well protected and warm niches in the coastal subtropics
- avoid low temperatures (lows well above freezing will kill)
- summer rainfall preferred with a drier winter period to promote a prolific spring bloom
- soil to be moisture retentive, well drained, fertile, rich in humus and heavily mulched. It is not truly drought tolerant, nor does it accept salinity
- young trees to be protected from hot sun and strong winds
- provide a windbreak to protect delicate new growth
- do not overcrowd – allow space for the plant to spread and bloom and be enjoyed.

Brachychiton Hybrids

Small Trees for Small Gardens

Paul Plant FAIH with Kerry Rathie



Few trees in the tropics & subtropics are more typically Australian than members of the genus *Brachychiton*.

They are well recognised as being drought tolerant and are known to handle high rainfall provided they have excellent drainage.

With around 40 species, several of which are yet to be described scientifically, brachychitons are found naturally over most of eastern and northern Australia. In domestic gardens only 4 species are widely grown, namely *B. acerifolius*, *B. discolor*, *B. populneus* and *B. rupestris*; with the shrub-like *B. bidwillii* gaining more popularity in Queensland.

The first 4 are medium to large trees in high demand for large gardens and public parks, and are frequently exported to overseas tourist resorts.

For small suburban gardens, *Brachychiton bidwillii* and its various hybrids make ideal specimens with showy flowers and smaller dimensions. They may not be as stately or effective shade producing trees compared to other species (such as *B. discolor*) however they are worthwhile plants for the garden and landscape.

Brachychitons are known for their variable foliage and flower characteristics. For example, seedling grown flame trees (*B. acerifolius*) can flower with no foliage, full foliage, or somewhere in between, with flowers in small or large clusters. Most flower for several weeks. The size and colour of individual flowers varies between trees. Orange shades are more common in trees from North Qld.

Hybrids versus Species

Whilst native purists may recommend only pure species should be grown, it is also well accepted that most gardens have a mixture of ornamental plants that are hybrids or cultivars of species.

Pure species are said to be more robust and hardier for the local climate and assist in preserving the gene pool of Australia's flora.

Hybrids are said to gain the benefit of 'hybrid vigour' for improved flowering and shape. The sprawling habit of *B. bidwillii* is made more acceptable to home gardeners and professional landscape designers with thanks to hybridising.

Top: 'Beau Belle' – can these blossoms be used as VERY large images as decorative elements to the article.

Left to Right: Flowering on the trunk is a feature of *B. bidwillii* 'Beau Belle'. **Unnamed hybrid – new hybrids are constantly being created.** Here are the blossoms of *B. bidwillii* 'Beau Belle' crossed with *Brachychiton acerifolius*. **The blossom in focus.**



© Kerry Rathie

