

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 15, Number 8, September 1993

FERN SOCIETY OF VICTORIA Inc.

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|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------|---|
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SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Single - \$15.00 (Pensioner/Student - \$11.00)

Family - \$18.00 (Pensioners - \$13.00)

Overseas - A\$30.00 (by Airmail)

Subscriptions fall due on 1st July each year.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

It was very pleasing at the Annual General Meeting to see the new blood come onto the Committee. I welcome Simon Hardin onto the Committee, and Henry Rossell who is a brand new member and who agreed to take on one of the Vice-President positions. It is also encouraging to see one of our more experienced members in John Hodges coming back onto the Committee for a second period of service, and also for John's wife, Norma, to join us. I look forward to a good year for the Society with the influx of new people onto the Committee. The members of the Committee who are continuing from last year are Margaret Radley, George Start and Bernadette Thomson.

There are still a few vacancies for the excursion to Gippsland on the 20th and 21st of November. Anyone interested in going should contact me or, as I will be away for a few weeks, Don Fuller whose phone number is 306 5570.

The meeting this month will consists of three segments. Firstly, there will be a session on soil testing by Terry Turney with Terry demonstrating and commenting on pH testing and salt measurement. Then there will be a segment by Chris Goudey on the Adiantums of Victoria, and finally there will be a gadget session wherein we will be relying on members to bring in any handy gadget or idea they may have to aid fern growing. It is a little while since we have had a gadget session so, even if you have brought your gadget in before, we do have new members and it would be worthwhile bringing it in again. The success of the segment will depend upon good support from members.

The fern competition category this month is an Adiantum and I hope we will see enough maidenhair to clothe several Lady Godivas.

Regards, Barry White

NEXT MEETING

DATE:

Thursday, 16th September, 1993

TIME:

From 7.30 p.m.

VENUE:

The National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens,

Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra. (Melway Directory Ref. 2L A1)

TOPICS:

(1) Soil Testing by Terry Turney

(2) Adiantums of Victoria by Chris Goudey

(3) Member's Gadgets

MEETING TIMETABLE

7.30 p.m. Pre-Meeting Activities: Sales of Ferns, Spore, Books and Special Effort Tickets; Library Loans.

✓ 8.00 p.m.

September General Meeting

8.20 p.m.

Topics of the Evening

9.30 p.m.

Fern Competition Judging Fern Identification and Pathology

Fern Identification and rachorogy

Special Effort Draw

9.45 p.m.

Supper

10.00 p.m.

Close.

FERN COMPETITION: The category for this month is an Adiantum.

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AUGUST FERN COMPETITION

The category for the fern competition for the July meeting was a Nephrolepis. Congratulations to the following winners:

First:

Dorothy Forte

Nephrolepis exaltata "Golden Gretnae"

Second:

Dorothy Forte

cordifolia "Petticoat"

Third:

Barry White

cordifolia "Plumosa"

The draw for the exhibitors' fern prize was won by Don Fuller.

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AUGUST GENERAL MEETING

Members present at the August general meeting were entertained and educated by a screening of two of the demonstrations videotaped at the 1987 Fern Show. Betty Allgood demonstrated methods for preparing hanging baskets and Bill Taylor covered the dividing and repotting of Adiantums.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1992/1993

(Presented at Annual General Meeting held 19th August, 1992)

It is a privilege to present the President's Report for this my second year. The year just past has been a moderately successful one for the Society with some pluses and some minuses.

MEMBERSHIP:

The membership of any Society is its lifeblood. Thirty two new memberships were received during the year and 28 memberships were not renewed, giving a slight gain. Further efforts will need to be made to maintain a positive membership situation.

FINANCIAL:

Thanks to the hard work of our new Treasurer and the new Auditor the annual Financial Statement is available on time. The new Auditor, Ron Angwin, has done an excellent job not only in auditing the books but also in establishing an improved book-keeping system. Our Treasurer, Don Fuller, has also done an excellent job and has put in a lot of work in getting the new system up and running.

The report shows a healthy asset situation but the current cash flow situation is not healthy. While the good asset situation means that there is no need to take panic action, the deficit incurred in this financial year cannot be allowed to continue.

MONTHLY MEETINGS:

The monthly meeting programme is the core function of the Society. There have been a number of excellent talks. Outside speakers have included Rob Hall from Holmesglen College, Simon Branson from Debco and Barbara Hoshizaki from U.S.A. Members of the Society who have contributed to the evening talks include Terry Turney, Chris Goudey, Mary Frost, Keith Hutchinson, Bill Taylor, Doug Thomas and Don Fuller.

The attendance at monthly meetings continues to be disappointing. The average attendance is about 40; the best attendance was 63 in October last year when we had the American fernists as guests and Barbara Hoshizaki addressed the meeting.

EXCURSIONS:

Four excursions were held during the year. The excursion to Badgers Creek in September was held in threatening weather, despite which fifteen members admired the many ferns in the compact area.

Sixteen of our members also joined in with the American fernists in their tour of the Otways in October. We were also joined by two members of the Fern Society of South Australia. It was a much appreciated opportunity to get to know the Americans, to discuss areas of mutual interest and to enjoy the fern valleys of the Otways.

In November, Chris and Lorraine Goudey opened their fernery and fern nursery to members of the Society. Chris's collection of ferns is second to none and one can always absorb a little bit more about ferns on every visit to his nursery.

In May of this year an excursion was held to Toolangi and Murrindindi. Damp weather often seems to be associated with our excursions and this was no exception. Despite the weather, seven car loads participated and appreciated an area which was new to most participants.

SHOWS:

Due to several factors the Annual Fern Show at Nunawading was not held this year. However, it is essential that the Society use every possible means to publicise itself and the Show is an excellent vehicle for this. Even if the financial return does not seem to be very great in return for the effort put into it, the Show still is a very good means of promoting ferns, of allowing members of the public to enjoy ferns and encouraging them to join the Society. However, if we are to mount a successful Show and to continue to mount shows we need support from many members. The Show cannot be left just to a willing few.

The Society did participate in the three-day Spring Garden Festival last September at the Waverley Garden Centre. A number of members provided valuable support. The inclement weather may have been responsible for the relatively poor public attendance and the time of the year was not good for putting on an impressive fern display, or for expanding the effort into a major fern sale occasion.

The Society also co-operated with the National Trust in mounting a small display and information stand during the "Focus on the Fernery" weekend at "Rippon Lea". Members also led conducted tours around the fernery. The Society will be participating again this year, when there will be a special concert to help attract a better response from the public.

NEWSLETTER:

The production of the Newsletter is a major function of the Society and the quality of it is a tribute to the Editor, Bob Lee. Thanks also go to those who assist in the production and mailing of the Newsletter: Jean Trudgeon, Margaret Radley, Kath Brown and John Oliver. The Newsletter is the main contact with the Society for the large majority of members and is a vital link with such members. It must continue to receive high priority in the running of the Society. However, the cost of producing the Newsletter is about \$14 per membership, and this contrasts with the average membership fee of \$12.40. Unless the difference can be compensated for in some other manner either the cost of producing the Newsletter will need to be reduced or the average membership fee will need to increase. The Newsletter finances will need serious consideration by the incoming Committee.

The one disappointing aspect of the Newsletter is the limited number of contributors. There must be a lot of useful information out there amongst members, information which could be shared with others with just a little effort.

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT:

The Committee of Management has functioned well over the year. Our thanks go especially to John Hooper and Don Fuller who took over the roles of Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Both were relatively new members of the Society but they assumed demanding roles on the

Committee and carried out their roles with enthusiasm; they illustrate the benefit of new blood on the Committee. The Committee has also been well served by its more experienced members, Bob Lee, Terry Turney, Bernadette Thomson, Margaret Radley and George Start.

LIBRARY:

David Radford has continued to serve the Society well by looking after the Library. After a period of little in the way of new acquisitions a number of new books have obtained for the Library. These acquisitions have tended to be on the technical side and will help to make the Library a useful reference source for members.

BOOK SALES:

Our appreciation goes to Stephen Ziguras who has taken over the role of Book Sales Officer from Derek Griffiths. Stephen was a brand new member when he volunteered to take on the position. Although there have not been many new books on ferns lately, the availability of books at well-discounted prices continues as an important service to members.

SPORE BANK:

The Spore Bank continues to function well and provides a means whereby the Society can assist distant members. The work of John Hooper as Assistant Spore Bank Manager is appreciated. Donors of spore are also much appreciated as the Spore Bank could not exist without them.

OTHER NON-ELECTED POSITIONS:

As usual a good range of other people contributed to the success of the Society over the year in various non-elected positions. The suppers are an important part of each meeting and our thanks go to Jean Boucher, Nancy Perry and Norma Hodges for their work in providing supper every month; to Margaret Radley and Joy Horman for their work in selling the raffle tickets each month; to John Oliver as Property Manager and keeper of the membership records; to Chris Goudey for undertaking the sometimes contentious role of Fern Judge at the monthly meetings, for providing ferns for sale at attractive prices at the meetings, and also for his handling of the Fern Table each month. I also wish to thank thanks members who bring along ferns for the Fern Competition or for the Fern Table. The presence of a variety of ferns adds greatly to the atmosphere of meetings.

I thank all members for their support over the year. I trust the next year will see the Society grow and prosper.

Barry White President

(The annual Financial Statement will be included in the next issue of the Newsletter)

DEBCO PRODUCT VIDEO

The second video left with us after the June meeting by Simon Branson of Debco Pty Ltd began with the same survey of Debco operations as the first and then covered the products "Terracotta and Tub Mixture", "Coprapeat" and "Orchid Growing Media".

"Terracotta and Tub Mixture" has been developed to counter the problem of rapid drying out that is experienced with porous terracotta containers. It contains "Saturaid" granules to maximise water absorption and "Water Storing Granules" (another Debco product) to increase the water holding capacity. The latter expand when water is added and form particles of gel which hold large quantities of water. They later contract as water is taken from them by the plant roots and then re-hydrate when the mix is next watered. The effective life is said to be at least five years and the breakdown products are not toxic. The performance of the mixture can be kept at its optimum by adding more Saturaid after about six months.

The sand used at about 15% by volume in earlier potting mixes to improve wettability after drying out has been omitted from Terracotta and Tub Mixture, resulting in a reduction on weight of about 25%. A special lightweight mix is made for hanging baskets and this has 50% more Water Storing Granules added to reduce drying out.

"Coprapeat" is a replacement for peat moss made from composted coconut pith with the addition of slow-release fertiliser, micronutrients, Saturaid granules and Zeolite. Unlike peat moss it rewets easily when dried out. It is used to build up the humus content of soils and improve soil structure; recommended addition rate is one part to four parts of soil.

The "Orchid Growing Media" consist solely of aged pine bark and are sold in several particle sizes to suit the different types of orchid plants. The video contains information on the techniques used for repotting orchids.

The two Debco videos will be available through the Library.

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Some points discussed during question time after Simon's presentation in June were:

- The specified rate of application for Water Storing Granules (1 gram per litre for potting mix and up to 1.75 g/l for hanging baskets) should not be exceeded or the expansion of the mixture when watered may overflow the pot.
- Terracotta and Tub Mix is being used in bulk by at least one commercial fern grower. Others are using Water Storing Granules and Saturaid in their own mixes.
- Leaf mould could be added to Terracotta and Tub Mix for fern growing but should not exceed 10% or drainage might be adversely affected.
- Debco do not sterilise any of their mixes because work has shown that sterilising destroys the beneficial as well as the antagonistic pathogens and hence there is nothing to combat any possible later antagonistic infection. Pasteurisation by the heat generated during composting gets rid of most seeds, etc.

SPEAKER REPORT - GENERAL MEETING - 15TH JULY, 1993

Speaker: Peter Bostock of Queensland Herbarium

Subject: RAMBLINGS AMONG FERNS IN NORTH EAST QUEENSLAND

With slides and a commentary that showed his detailed knowledge of his subject Peter took us on a fascinating fern journey from Cape York south through upland and lowland areas to the vicinity of Brisbane. We saw numerous ferns, many of them unusual and exotic to Victorian eyes.

The presentation began at the 300-metre high escarpment of the Glennie Tableland on Cape York with a view towards the coast, which showed numerous patches of dark green rainforest (there are over 100 separate patches in an area of about 80 square kilometres). These are the typical palm/vine forests of Cape York Peninsula, consisting about 90% of lawyer vines, palms and pandanus, a very prickly environment through which progress can only be made by chopping a path with a machete. However, the ferns to be found provide some compensation.

In one of these patches, Peter had his first view of Cyathea exilis, an unusual little tree fern standing about a metre tall and with trunk only a few centimetres in diameter. It is unusual in that it has buds at the frond bases from which new plants grow if the tree falls over. It is apparently found only in this particular patch of vine scrub and there are only a few dozen plants. The new species Asplenium capitis—york named by David Jones a few years ago — see "F.S.V. Newsletter", 11(5), 44 (May,1989) — also occurs in these vine scrubs, growing almost exclusively on sandstone boulders.

On the Glennie Tableland itself, which is cut in half by the Olive River that is fed by numerous small springs in the sandstone, Peter saw Sticherus milnei, Cyathea felina (which resists all attempts to grow it south of Cape York) and Antrophyum callifolium, a well-grown plant of which has an attractive blue iridescence.

We were shown a slide of a pressed herbarium specimen of the fabled Blue Tassel Fern, Lycopodium (Huperzia) dalhousieana, collected "on Cape York". Peter has never seen one in the wild and doubts that he ever will in Australia. Most of the sites where it used to be are now cane farms and the others have been stripped of plants. It is widespread in New Guinea but in Australia is a lowland remnant that has suffered badly at white man's hands.

Mount Bellenden Ker between Cairns and Innisfail has a height of 1,500 metres. The cable car up it entered cloud at 800 metres and Peter spent a cold and very wet day at 5°C in a 50 kph wind. The mountain is cloud covered about 300 days of the year and annual rainfall is around 11 metres. Ferns seen included Cyathea robertsiana, Dicksonia herbertii (common on the mountain and widespread in north Queensland), Leptopteris fraseri with a trunk nearly two metres high, and Blechnum patersonii which clearly has a very wide distribution. One of Peter's reasons for visiting Mt. Bellenden Ker was to see Dryopteris sparsa, which has been on the rare and threatened list for some time. It is probably rare rather than endangered, as it was very common just below the summit of this mountain on mossy rocks and has been found on a few mountains in north Queensland. One of two Australian endemic genera in the wet tropics is Pteridoblechnum neglectum, which has brilliant purple/red new growth and is widespread above 1,000 metres. Blechnum wurunuran also has beautiful wine-red new growth. Elaphoglossum

queenslandicum was thought to be confined to the wet tropics, where it is widespread, but a large single colony has recently been found at Eungella near Mackay.

A few kilometres west at Mount Haig near Tinaroo Dam the ferns were not much different. One of the highlights was Cyathea woollsiana which is nearly as glossy as the New Zealand C. medullaris though not as large; it is normally a lowland fern but has a wide range. Oenotrichia tripinnata is one of Peter's favourites in this area.

A specific reason for Peter's recent visit to north Queensland was to look for Chingia australis in the Russell River valley (between Babinda and Innisfail). The creek where it was found had a number of interesting ferns in it, including the climber Lomariopsis kingii. This starts life as an insignificant plant with simple fronds only three centimetres long. When it starts to climb it becomes more and more divided into a pinnate form. Two ferns classified as rare and threatened but relatively common in this area are Asplenium excisum and Plesioneuron tuberculatum. Many of the ferns classed as rare have been under collected by herbaria and the extent of their distribution is uncertain. One of the reasons Peter is doing his wet tropics work is to "put more dots on the map".

Other ferns from this lowland area shown were Angiopteris evecta (fronds to seven metres long), Callipteris prolifera, Pronephrium triphyllum, Dipteris conjugata and Diplazium cordifolium. The last is another fern which has suffered from clearing for cane farms and was thought to be almost extinct; it is now common in many places.

A colony of *Lindsaea repens* was found beside a creek on Fraser Island, well south of its normal limit at Cardwell, some 100 km south of Cairns. The creeks on Fraser Island, which are fed by water flowing from the sand dunes, flow at the same rate all year round, irrespective of the amount of rainfall.

We were shown a slide of the type plant of Asplenium harmanii, a Bird's-nest fern which is named after Colin Harman, the founder of the Botanical Gardens on the Lamington Plateau. It has an irregular shape and the fronds do not form a definite nest. It grows only on rocks or the ground, not in trees, and occurs in an arc from the Lamington Plateau through to Toowoomba and probably occurs in N.S.W.

Peter has been working on a number of hybrids, such as one from Mount Glorious near Brisbane which appears to be a hybrid between Blechnum cartilagineum and Doodia aspera. A new generic name may be in the offing!

An Adiantum found at Tingalpa near Brisbane has a membranous frond like A. diaphanum but with no hairs at all. However, under the indusium it has the hooked hairs characteristic of A. hispidulum var. "Whitei". It has the root tubers of A. diaphanum.

Adiantum capillus-veneris "Chillagoe form" was only one centimetre high when found in baking sun on the edge of the Chillagoe weir. Peter cultivated a piece at home where it grew larger and larger, finally becoming the normal form about 40 cm high and very vigorous.

An undescribed form of Adiantum hispidulum, which grew to a maximum of 10 cm high, was very stoloniferous and formed extensive colonies. A. hispidulum is very variable in form and Peter's theory is that it is an asexual producer which mutates extensively. Each mutation is a

species in its own right (being asexual it must be unique). The form shown has stabilised and is found at about 50 sites in vine forests and hoop pine scrubs between Brisbane and Rockhampton. The variability decreases in southern areas.

Peter left with us a list of recent sightings of Queensland ferns, part of his contribution to "more dots on the map". This is reproduced below.

President Barry White thanked Peter on behalf of members present for an excellent talk and presented him with some Society glasses.

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NEW DISTRIBUTION RECORDS FOR QUEENSLAND FERNS

Peter D. Bostock Oueensland Herbarium

- Asplenium normale Eungella National Park, R.J. Chinnock, P.D. Bostock and S.G. Pearson, April 1993. First collection outside Wet Tropics (Herberton area) and only the third for Australia. A small colony near summit of a mountain, growing on small boulders under rainforest, at about 1100 m altitude.
- Dryopteris sparsa Eungella National Park, R.J. Chinnock, P.D. Bostock & S.G. Pearson, April 1993. First collection outside wet tropics (mainly Bellenden Ker/Bartle Frere area). Rarely collected. Small group of plants in two locations, at about 900m altitude. Both colonies appeared to be suffering from drought, although conditions when seen were extremely wet!
- Blechnum wattsii Eungella National Park, P.D. Bostock & R.J. Chinnock, April 1993. Common along creeks between Mt. David and Mt. Dalrymple at about 900m altitude. First collection north of Kroombit Tops (about 300 km to south).
- Elaphoglossum queenslandicum Eungella National Park, S.G. Pearson & P.D. Bostock. Very extensive single colony on steep escarpment below summit of mountain at about 1000m altitude. Hundreds of plants present, growing with *Boea hygroscopica*. First collection south of Wet Tropics.
- Actinostachys digitata Byfield National Park, R. Melzer, March 1993. Small colony in littoral rainforest on sand, alongside spring-fed creek. First collection in Qld south of Hinchinbrook Island.
- Cyathea rebeccae Byfield National Park, R. Melzer, April 1993. Single plant (?) near Actinostachys digitata site. Ca 300km south of nearest previous known limit (Mackay/Proserpine area).
- Chingia australis Russell River valley, R. Jago, December 1992. Previously known only from type collection by R. Chinnock and P. Brownsey in 1982, from Johnstone River area. A small colony of about 50 plants, along a 100 metre of creek bank.
- Plesioneuron tuberculatum Russell River valley, R.L. Jago and others, 1992. Previously known only from a single cultivated specimen in Atherton (the origin was unknown although assumed to be fieldcollected). Quite common along certain creeks!

NEW LIBRARY ACQUISITION

"PTERIDOPHYTE FLORA OF OAXACA, MEXICO"

By John Mickel and Joseph Beitel, 568 pages, published by the New York Botanical Garden, 1988.

Mexico is often thought of as a hot dry country, courtesy of Hollywood, but the Southern States have an extremely rich fern flora. There are over 1000 different ferns in Mexico and 645 species or varieties have been collected in Oaxaca.

Oaxaca is a southern state of Mexico bordering on the Pacific. It is dominated by two mountain ranges, the highest peak is Cerro Zempoaltepetl ("mountain of twenty peaks") at 3,396 metres where, according to the authors, turkey sacrifices are still made at a crude rock altar on the summit.

The book contains a key to the genera and species of Oaxaca. The genera are arranged alphabetically which makes it easy for non-botanists to locate individual ferns. There is a good description of each fern together with notes on synonyms, distribution and often a comment on special distinguishing characteristics.

The outstanding feature of the book and what makes it a very valuable reference work is the 129 pages of excellent line drawings of ferns including detailed drawings of diagnostic features. The quality of the line drawings is outstanding and a credit to all concerned.

Many of the ferns in the book are readily available in Australia and the book may clarify some of the misnomers which sometimes plague us.

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Maxicrop

SPECIAL EFFORT WINNERS

August General Meeting

Norma Hodges

Margaret Radley (2)

George Start

Joan Taylor

Mavis Potter

Allison Whytecross

Jean Trudgeon

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Opinions expressed in articles in this Newsletter are the personal views of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by the Society, nor does mention of a product constitute its endorsement.

BUYERS' GUIDE TO NURSERIES

VICTORIA:

Andrew's Fern Nursery / Castle Creek Orchids - Retail.

Goulburn Valley Highway, Arcadia, 3613. (20 km south of Shepparton).

Large range of ferns and orchids for beginners and collectors.

Open daily 10 am - 5 pm except Christmas Day. Ph: (058) 26 7285.

Austral Ferns - Wholesale Propagators. Ph: (052) 82 3084. Specialising in supplying retail nurseries with a wide range of hardy ferns; no tubes.

Coach Road Ferns - Wholesale. Monbulk. Ph: 756 6676.

Retail each Saturday and Sunday at the Upper Ferntree Gully Market (railway station car park), Melway Ref. 74 F5. Wide selection of native and other ferns. Fern potting mix also for sale.

Fern Acres Nursery - Retail. Kinglake West, 3757. (On main road, opposite Kinglake West Primary School). Ph: (057) 86 5481. Specialising in Stags, Elks and Bird's-nest Ferns.

Fern Glen - Wholesale and Retail. Visitors welcome. D. & I. Forte, Garfield North, 3814. Ph: (056) 29 2375.

R. & M. Fletcher's Fern Nursery - Retail.

62 Walker Road, Seville, 3139. Ph: (059) 64 4680.

(Look for sign on Warburton Highway, 300m east of Seville shopping centre). Closed Tuesday, except on public holidays.

Kawarren Fernery - Wholesale and Retail.
Situated on the Colac - Gellibrand Road, Kawarren (20 km south of Colac). Ph: (052) 35 8444.

<u>Viewhaven Nursery</u> - Wholesale and Retail. Avon Road, Avonsleigh (near Emerald), 3782. Ph: (059) 68 4282 Specialists in Stags, Elks, Bird's-nests and Native Orchids.

NEW SOUTH WALES:

Jim & Beryl Geekie Fern Nursery - Retail. By appointment. 6 Nelson Street, Thornleigh, 2120. Ph: (02) 484 2684.

Kanerley Fern Exhibition and Nursery - Wholesale and Retail. 204 Hinton Road, Nelsons Plains, via Raymond Terrace, 2324. Ph: (049) 87 2781. Closed Thursdays and Saturdays. Groups of more than 10 must book in advance, please.

Marley's Ferns - Wholesale.
5 Seaview Street, Mt. Kuring-Gai, 2080. Ph: (02) 457 9168.
All Fern Society members welcome. By appointment.

QUEENSLAND:

Moran's Highway Nursery - Wholesale and Retail.

Bruce Highway, Woombye (1 km north of Big Pineapple; turn right into Keil Mountain Road). P.O. Box 47, Woombye, 4559. Ph: (074) 42 1613.