

FUNDING THE GARDEN

In July 1982 Council made two critical decisions:

The official opening of the Botanic Garden would form the centrepiece of Coffs Harbour's 1988 Bicentenary celebrations.

Plans and specifications for a Botanic Garden supervisor's cottage were authorized.

Real progress was underway. With Council funding, bicentennial and unemployment grants, generous donations from local organizations, and an increasing Friends group of workers the results began to show:

May 83 saw the first visitors to the Garden.

March 84 work began in Prime Display Area.

June 84 the first boardwalk was completed

July 84 Information Centre work commenced

March 85 first Rare and endangered plantings

June 85 work on the Greenhouses started.

November 85 Information Centre completed

May 86 extensive walkway system in place

October 86 entrance paving and beautification

June 87 lakes and pathways completed

September 87 sensory garden and rainforest

February 88 car park sealing & beautification.

1997 Herbarium established as home to 28,000 pressed plants from the Forestry commission.

1998. Seed bank established, guided tours and people mover.

2004 The Friends built a pavilion serving as a music shell for concerts

2007 Japanese Childrens Day with koinobori kites donated by the people of sister city Sasebo.

2009 Recycled water was connected through the Garden.

2011 Work commenced on traditional Japanese Garden, comprising Zen Garden, Contemplation room, water pavilion and tea house.

OFFICIAL OPENING

The North Coast Regional Botanic Garden was opened by Sir Alexander Beattie on 17th September 1988. Mayor, Bernie Malouf, and Friends President Jack Lawson praised the co-operation between the Parks and Recreation Department, and the Community that made the vision into a reality.

OPENING JUST THE START

1990 NSW Best Community Project

1991 Botanic Garden Foundation approved.

1992 Reserve for Environmental Protection.

1994 National Banksia Award

1997 NSW Best Community Project (KABC)

1997 National CommunityLink Award.

2007 Japanese Festival of Children's Day awarded special National award for best sister city project from Sister Cities Association.

NORTH COAST REGIONAL Botanic Garden COFFS HARBOUR

HISTORY of the BOTANIC GARDEN



The FRIENDS of the NORTH COAST REGIONAL BOTANIC GARDEN Inc. is an active community group who would very much appreciate your donation, which will be used to further develop the attractions and amenities

HISTORY OF THE SITE.

(Primary reference:

COFFS HARBOUR. Neil Yeates)

The far end of the site was dedicated as a Reserve for a Night Soil Depot in 1907, and soon after Coffs sanitary arrangements came under scrutiny. There was no proper disposal from the 132 dwellings, cesspits were in use at 20, while at the majority 'old boxes, kerosene tins, etc' were being used. Dorrigo Shire Council advertised for a 'nightman' to service the 600 residents. The location was 'ideal' - unobtrusive - located between the busy jetty and the blacksmiths shop—and as a bonus the night-soil was washed away periodically by Coffs Creek.

In 1923 it became a multi purpose site, with additional areas set aside for a Rubbish Depot. By 1932 the contractor, Charlie Gibley, twice a day emptied his double-decker horse drawn cart, and brother Jack made three trips in a smaller spring cart. The night soil was buried in hand-dug trenches, and the cans were cleaned and tarred on site.

They tried a second-hand Chevrolet truck but the dreadful state of the road into the depot soon forced a return to horses. After nine years at sixpence a can, and two-pence a garbage can, (it was a profitable business with 31,700 services in 1933), they let the contract go and bought banana plantations.

In 1943 Dorrigo Council (with only one Coffs Councillor, C. Riding, in a 6-man Council) built a new shed, improved the access road, and acquired a motor vehicle. Public Works commenced planning a town sewerage scheme in 1944.

The site, known as Wilson Park, was used as a night-soil disposal area from 1907, and as a rubbish dump from 1938 to 1964.

BOTANIC GARDEN CONCEPT

The Coffs Harbour Planning Scheme, drawn up in 1959 by Roy McRae, a Town Planner from Sydney, recommended a Botanic Garden for the area, then known as Wilson Park. His vision was not rewarded, and the Council minute was noted, filed and forgotten.

It was not until 1973 the potential of the site was again recognised. Following a canoe trip down Coffs Creek, the Ulitarra Society, a community group dedicated to conservation ideals, came up with a Botanic Garden concept. Over a three month period they spoke to 18 local organisations, and gained their support. In November 1973 they presented to Council a well documented and researched submission. 'Plan for Management of Natural Areas, Coffs Creek', prepared by Alex Floyd, Peter Roberts and Lloyd Jones.

The ADVOCATE editorial 'GARDEN A VISIONARY PLAN' of 9th November 1973 concluded *"such a scheme would transform a neglected area in the centre of our future city into a garden wonderland. If we let this opportunity slip through our fingers it may never come again"*.

Council also considered representations for an industrial area, a lion park!, for sporting fields and a licensed club. Council approved the Botanic Garden concept. And two years later in August 1975 Reserve 1975 89558 for Botanic Gardens was gazetted.

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Such a visionary concept took time to implement. With strong support from Shire Clerk Rod Firman, effective lobbying by Councillor Les Hayworth, (President of the local Society for Growing Australian Plants), and assistance from Maurice

Watson (Sydney Botanic Garden), the Council commissioned John Wrigley (Curator, National Botanic Garden, Canberra) to prepare a Development Plan.

Following a Conference on the development of Botanic Gardens—Coffs Harbour organized by the University of New England in May 1980, Council adopted the Development Plan, and engaged John Wrigley as a consultant.

FORMATION OF THE FRIENDS

A public meeting in August 1980 formed the Friends Steering Committee who arranged the inaugural meeting of the Friends of the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden on 9th April 1981. Bert Clarke, who had worked tirelessly from the critical time of Council's deliberations, and as a member of the steering Committee was elected President, Lesley Schoer as Secretary and Marnie Yeates as Treasurer.

This small dedicated group, with a vision of a beautiful Botanic Garden in the centre of Coffs Harbour organised a working bee for the following Saturday to remove flowering groundsel bush. This was the start of the weekly working bees, that first cleaned up thirty years of bottle and can dumps and removed camphor laurel, coral trees and car bodies, then built paths, planted new areas, and work proudly as members of the "Friends".



Friends logo Broad-leaved Geebung