

The flora of subtropical eastern Australia is rich in variety - containing over 3,000 species of plants. The region also has a very high number of endemic plants or species which only occur naturally in this climate zone.

MAP:

The World Heritage listed Gondwana Rainforest parks near Coffs Harbour. These ancient forests tell a story of the break up of the Gondwana super-continent, and of continental drift with the evolution of plants – from ferns and palms to pines and the majestic flowering rainforest trees and eucalypts.



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With acknowledgement and respect to the first botanists and Traditional Custodians of country, the Gumbaynggirr people and their elders.



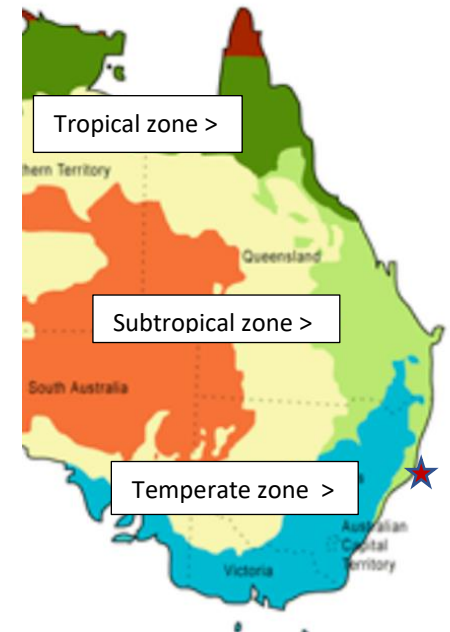
Journey into the Subtropics

Follow the paths on this easy 200 metre discovery circuit trail around the entrance gardens to learn about plants which thrive in the subtropics.

★ Coffs Harbour is at the southern edge of the sub-tropical climate zone on the east Australian coast. Nearby mountain ranges influence the climate by forcing warm moist air from the Pacific ocean up the Great Eastern Ranges to produce rainfall.

Summers are warm and wet. Winters are mild. Thriving in this climate are a variety of ferns, palms, vines, orchids and other warmth loving plants.

A tall canopy of Blackbutt, Swamp Mahogany and Turpentine trees provide shelter to the plants below.



The rare **Swamp Orchids** (*Phaius* genus) grow naturally here in damp soil and can be seen by the path half way around the circuit walk.

[1] START: TREE FERNS BY THE POND

Two types of tree fern can be found here. The **Coin Spot, or Straw Tree Fern** (*Cyathea cooperi*) is found mainly in the subtropical zone. Notice the coin like marks on the trunk? The Rough Tree Fern (*Cyathea australis*) is more widespread to temperate areas. Look around the pond to see if you can spot the Eastern Water Dragon – a sun loving lizard that swims well.

[2] TALL PALMS

The wet forests around Coffs Harbour are home to two main types of tall palms: The **Bangalow Palm** (*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*) which has feather shaped fronds. Further along the path is the **Cabbage Tree Palm** (*Livistonia australis*) which has fan shaped fronds, and is mainly found in the wetter soils in the coastal subtropical floodplains.

[3] FLAVOURSOME PLANTS

A **Peppervine** (*Piper hederaceum*) climbs the tree by the path. It produces a red fruit loved by the birds. It is related to the Black Pepper (*Piper nigrum*) native to Malaysia which is the pepper we use. Further along the path is the **Lemon Myrtle** (*Backhousia citriodora*), a handy spice and the **Queensland Davidson Plum**, also known as 'Ooray' (*Davidsonia pruriens*) used in jams and relishes.

[4] FERN GULLY AND THE EPIPHYTES

The epiphytic **Bird's Nest Fern** (*Asplenium australasicum*) is designed to catch falling food! Look for little ferns growing on stumps and rocks as well as some larger plants on the ground. Epiphytes can attach to trees, stumps and rocks and feed on fallen leaves and other organic matter.

[5] WATER, SOIL AND FOREST TREES

The tall forest canopy shades and protects the moist subtropical plants below. In the wetter soils are the **Swamp Mahogany** (*Eucalyptus robusta*) and the **Paperbark** (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*). Nearby in sandier well drained soils are the **Blackbutt** (*Eucalyptus pilularis*) and the **Turpentine tree** (*Syncarpia glomulifera*). Turpentine trees were logged in Coffs Harbour to provide marine resistant piers for boat wharves.

[6] ANCIENT GONDWANA

Towering above is the **Queensland Kauri** (*Agathis robusta*), an unusual conifer with leaves not pine needles. It has an ancient lineage back to the era of dinosaurs. Underneath is the **Bolwarra or Native Guava** (*Eupomatia laurina*) a subtropical rainforest plant with an edible fruit.

[7] ORCHIDS & BROMELIADS

The **Swamp Orchids** (*Phaius* genus) live here in damp soils. The leaves of the **Cunjevoi** (*Alocasia brisbanensis*) resemble elephant ears and carpet the forest floor in greenery. Across the main path the roots of a fallen tree provide the perfect home to epiphytic Bromeliads.

[8] SHORT PALMS & GIANT FERN

Three shorter palms are found here:

1. **Narrow-leaved Palm Lily** (*Cordyline stricta*) – sprays of purple flowers
2. **Broad-leaved Palm Lily** (*Cordyline petiolaris*) – clusters of red fruit
3. **Walking Stick Palm** (*Linospadix monostachyos*) – shaped like its name! Nearby, walk under the huge fronds of the **Giant Fern** (*Angiopteris evecta*), another 'living fossil' found from the Tweed region north into Queensland.

