

**ASGAP PALM & CYCAD STUDY GROUP**

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**Newsletter No. 91 Early June 2005**

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**Mea Culpa :** Once again I am cramming all newsletters into the last month of the financial year. Can't blame it on the computer this time, but have waited until flowering etc. information was in. I had hoped to get web sites set up for both study groups by now, so that I can direct people to the relevant parts of the sites for 2 main purposes :- (1) to display colour images without the cost of colour photocopying, & (2) to set up fairly static information on what species exist, & their

horticultural pros & cons.

I should have had this done in July 2005, but July or August this year is now likely. I will be grateful to receive images (pictures) for future use on the website. Easiest for me are email attachments, of images from a digital camera. If these were for use in a book, the images need to be detailed (lots of pixels), say as taken by a 4 megapixel camera, & each taking up over a megabyte of computer memory. For use on a web site, where users of the site will want to be able to rapidly call up pages, the images are best kept as small as is compatible with them looking OK. Rarely do they need to be over 80 KB, & usually half that is fine. Windows can size down images for emails, & I can edit down (if necessary) any size I get. Analog (film) pictures can easily be converted to digital, but at a cost. I am hoping SGAP-Qld. will soon acquire the necessary equipment to do it cheaply & easily. Images of the less common species will of course be the most useful, plus natural & contrived hybrids.

For each study group I have edited items so that, for instance, all the weather bits are in the early June newsletters, for easier reading.

**Membership Matters :** Subs are still \$5 in Australia & \$10 for overseas, & run from July in one year to June in the next. The 1-line table below shows your status as per my records, where a tick means paid up.

'02-'03	'03-'04	'04-'05	'05-'06	'06-'07
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**Nomenclature Conventions :** To be pedantic, all scientific names should be in italics, & all cultivar names in quotes, but I have mostly only done this to avoid confusion, or for the first appearance of a cultivar or species in this newsletter. I do follow the convention that all species names are lower case, & cultivar names start with a capital letter.

**Weather & Plant Behaviour :** Here we are in our fourth year of drought, & my local creek (from which I pump to dams in normal years) has not run for 3 years. Heavy rain on the Gold & Sunshine Coasts in recent years has not penetrated inland as far as the dams that supply Brisbane, & only bucket watering is now allowed. Toowoomba does not allow even that.

Winter 2005 was quite mild, with only 5 or so mild frosts. The big *Cycas canalis* nearly flushed in late July, after 3 weeks of warmish days. It began to flush, with 23 leaves, on October 20 th.. My largest *C. maconochiei* flushed 4 days later. A month later the big *C. 'kennedyana'* made megasporophylls, & then flushed with 23 leaves on 26-12-05. After Christmas the *C. arnhemica* killed off its 8 old leaves, & on 5-1-06 started an abortive leaf flush ( they rotted off about 2 days later, for no obvious reason). It made 8 good leaves in a flush starting on 15-4-06.

Spring of 2005 was cooler than usual, & followed by some very hot days in January (as in southern states), & some apparent sunburn was seen in a few *Macrozamia mooreis* & *Encephalartos* flushing then. The first frost of 2006, a -3 on May 24<sup>th</sup>, came about a month earlier than usual, set a record low for May, & has been followed by 15 since, mostly light.

My cycads are bearing up well to the dry times. Several *Archontophoenix tuckeri*, *cunninghamii* & *myolaensis* have succumbed recently, after 8 or so years in the ground, of which the last 5 have been years of well under half of our average rainfall. In the same genus, *A. purpurea* & *A. maxima* still seem fine, as do older bangalows.

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**Epiphytes on Cycads :** On visiting areas around Darwin in December, I was struck by the number of epiphytic ferns & orchids on cycad trunks. Most were *Dendrobium dicuphum* & *Drynaria quercifolia*. On a large *Cycas 'kennedyana'* (a hybrid of *C. media* according to Ken Hill) at my place, one side of the trunk has been colonised by 4 *Asplenium australasicum* (Crow's Nest fern), 3 *Drynaria reticulatum*, 2 elkhorn ferns & 3 staghorns (both *Platyceriums*). Also at my place, a mature *Macrozamia moorei* with a 6 foot tall caudex is now home to a *Colysis* fern, several *Nephrolepis* (weedy fishbone), 3 *Drynaria* & 4 *Polypodium* ferns, probably exotic. Other mature *M. moorei*s down the paddock about 600 m from any ferns, & only very sparsely watered, also have crow's nest & *Drynaria* & fishbone ferns.