

Volunteer profile - High-flying "Big" Ed Turner

Edmund "Big Ed" Turner is a high flyer - literally.

He came to the Botanic Gardens "to learn about plants; I am not a good gardener," he explains. He simply turned up at the volunteer work shed one Thursday and has been coming back ever since.

Born and bred in the hills above Adelaide in South Australia, Ed was determined to fly as soon as he left school.

His career took him to Cairns where he flew twin-engine light aircraft, taking passengers and freight as far north as Mornington Island.

"It was great fun," says Ed. "Most of the airfields were dirt strips."

He graduated to a 30-seat aircraft and moved south to Brisbane, flying to towns as diverse as Charleville and Moree.

His employer went broke and Ed took up flying medivac trips in New Caledonia, then took a break from the air, buying a mini concrete truck to work on the Mango Hill development in northern Brisbane.

But in 2005 he was flying a four-engine plane out of Cairns - again. He began as flying officer (second in command) and soon



as a captain for six years.

"I was really pleased to be back in Cairns. I love the warm environment."

A heart attack put an end to his flying career although Ed is proud that he has re-established his licence.

Ed's partner, Jen, has two children and they now have two grandchildren.

So, if ever the volunteers feel like a quick trip to the Botanic Garden at Mount Tomah - or Fiji - maybe we should have a chat with Big Ed.

Botanic Gardens hosts the Twin Towns Garden Club



We were delighted recently to host the Twin Towns Garden Club to morning tea and a guided tour of our Gardens in a reciprocal visit after the Club hosted a group of our volunteers during a bus trip that included the Tweed area.

More than 40 members of the Club joined us for a tour and many Club members then visited our propagation area to purchase plants.



Tamboirine Mountain Botanic Gardens Inc

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Farewell to Eddie Fenton - our dedicated and cheeky Works Manager

Edmund Argo Fenton - known as Eddie to every volunteer at the Tamboirine Mountain Botanic Gardens - has left a large gap in the lives of all who knew him.

Eddie died suddenly while out with his wife Diana on their regular "date day" late last year. He was aged 79.

The Botanic Gardens volunteers were among more than 120 family, friends and colleagues who gathered for the funeral and later at a Celebration of Life in his much-loved Gardens.

Eddie was a passionate family man to Diana, his daughter Anita, grandchildren Freya and Phoebe and son-in-law Geoff Marshall.

His dedication to the Botanic Gardens sometimes led Diana to wonder whether their home in North Street was his first or second residence!

The diversity of people who attended the funeral at the Parkside Chapel in Allambe Memorial Park, Nerang, and later at the Celebration of his Life in the Botanic Gardens demonstrated the affection with which he was held across the community.

In giving the eulogy for Eddie during the



funeral, Geoff Marshall offered the following story to demonstrate Eddie's personality.

"As livestock manager on a farm adjoining the Queen's Sandringham estate in Norfolk, he moved cattle, occasionally being hindered by local shooting parties. 'Get out of the bloody way' he would shout so the animals weren't upset, and Prince Phillip would do what he was told!"

Margaret Bell spoke at the Celebration, telling the gathering: "Eleven years ago the volunteers were desperately in need of a tractor driver and along came Eddie with his tractor skills plus much more."

She summed up the sentiment of everyone at the Celebration: "He leaves a huge void. He will be missed terribly."

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Potty Potters excel again with a giant plant sale

Our Potty Potters brilliantly demonstrated their skills during the giant plant sale on site on a Saturday at the beginning of February. A fantastic selection of plants large and small, from favourite begonias to succulents and perennials were available. Prices generally ranged from \$3 to \$20 with a few special plants, including a giant ficus, fetching far more.

The plants for sale as well as everything in the Botanic Gardens were looking lush and vibrant since the recent rains.

The Botanic Gardens' famous sausage sizzle also did great business for hungry visitors.

The Potty Potters raised more than \$2,700 during the sale while the sausage sizzle contributed close to \$200.

Funds from the sale will be used for the maintenance and development of the Botanic Gardens. We donated \$500 from sale takings to our brave and tireless State Emergency Services volunteers adding to the \$1,086 we collected for them in September.

*ABOVE: Crowds of bargain hunters
BELOW: Potty Potter Bobby White with the giant ficus.*



Botanic Gardens welcomes Australian native bees

The Botanic Gardens has new residents - Australian native bees.

The small hive in a grey box attached to a eucalypt in the perennial garden has been lent to the Gardens by Mountain resident and bee enthusiast Luke Scaddan.

Please observe and enjoy but do not disturb the hive. And don't worry about being stung! Native bees are stingless.

Luke became interested in native bees after discovering hives in fire hydrant pits when he was conducting routine checks as a firefighter in Brisbane.

The destruction of habitat due to urban development has forced the bees to select odd locations for new hives.

Luke rescued the hives he found and has since expanded his collection to more than 20 hives on his property on Tamborine Mountain where he lives with wife Emma and their daughter.

Luke explains: "I thought it would be a good time with the recent bushfires to see how our bees have adapted to survive in the wild. Generally, hives are found in hollows of trees and logs on the ground.

"Unlike European bees that can swarm and 'evacuate' when under threat, Australian native bees use the strategy of defence and will always stop flying to retreat and 'Stay and Defend' their hive. They rely on the insulation of the tree trunk to stop the fire heat and will have pre-built a thick hard layer inside (called batumen) to assist further in protecting the colony while the fire front passes.

"Once the threat is passed, foraging bees may attempt to cool the inside of the hive by flapping their wings towards the entrance hole in formation (I have seen this after a fire before).



ABOVE: Luke Scaddan with a native bee hive in our Botanic Gardens.

"On the other hand, bee hives in man-made boxes can be quickly relocated and cooled with water in an emergency.

"Both circumstances will weaken a hive but if there are enough eggs and stores inside it should recover with time."

Luke says scientists have identified more than 2,000 species of native bees in Australia and continue to identify new species.

The natives are not prolific honey manufacturers.

Luke explains: "A European hive might yield up to 45 kilograms of honey in a year. A native hive yields no more than one kilo."