

bamboo

Vol. 22

bulletin



BAMBOO SOCIETY of AUSTRALIA inc.
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Consider overhead powerlines when planting bamboo

When planting bamboo make sure you consider the location for planting and how tall and wide it will grow – as over time the bamboo could come into contact with overhead powerlines. Avoid planting underneath overhead powerlines and don't forget to check for underground cables in the area before you dig.

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If you are trimming bamboo make sure you are aware of any nearby powerlines. If the bamboo is close to a powerline do not attempt to trim it yourself – get in a qualified arborist with experience in working near overhead powerlines to do the job.

When cleaning up from storms, be careful as fallen branches and debris could be hiding fallen powerlines. Treat any fallen or damaged powerlines as live.

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For further information contact:

Electrical Safety Office call 1300 362 128 or visit electricalsafetyoffice.qld.gov.au

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Reader Contributions

We would love to publish your bamboo experiences. If you would be interested in sharing your information on bamboo growing, managing, building or cooking, send text and attached photos to Mark McCarthy at: editor@bamboo.org.au



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From the President

The past couple of years have been challenging for everyone and now changes and new energy are needed for the *Bamboo Bulletin*. Mark McCarthy is putting down his editor's pen after 12 issues. Mark has done a marvellous job as editor, visited bamboo properties, researched nomenclature changes, presented bamboo varieties, and provided many wonderful images to illustrate his articles. He did all this with minimal contributions from other members. If the *Bamboo Bulletin* is to continue, we need a new editor now and more articles from our members. Mark has expressed his willingness to help with a handover to a new editor.

The 2021 AGM is being planned for Sunday 3rd October, at Crystal Waters Eco Village, near Maleny. All board positions are open for nomination. This meeting will be a crucial one for the Society which may be wound up if new people willing to serve on the committee can't be found. The board needs some enthusiastic members with fresh ideas to promote bamboo – through workshops, open days and competitions, as have been run in the past, or new activities utilising social media, perhaps.

A motion was passed at the last AGM approving in principle funding up to \$5,000 for building a trailer mounted mobile Boucherie bamboo treatment system. It has lapsed for want of anyone willing or able to investigate how it might proceed. This project could be revived at the coming AGM if there are members prepared to work on it. Another project idea is a portable kiln to make charcoal from waste bamboo.

To finish on a brighter note, the BSA's website at <https://www.bamboo.org.au/> continues to provide useful information about the Society, membership, the magazine and more.

I'm looking forward to a good rollup at the coming AGM and some new board members to help revitalise our Bamboo Society in its 23rd year of existence.

Barry O'Connell



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Bambusa membranacea Grandis - the recent introduction by seed adding to the many forms we have in Australia.

From the Editor's Desk

The information on bamboo and electricity (inside front cover) was supplied by Electrical Safety Office in Queensland after a number of incidents where culms have come in contact with powerlines.

In this issue we look at the many forms of *Bambusa membranacea*, an impressive bamboo with fine leaves, strong timber and spectacular shoots.

Crowscraft Bamboo Nursery was severely impacted by bushfire. I have visited a number of times since to document the recovery and realise the strengths and weakness of different species.



New shoot of Asian Lemon bamboo, introduced as tissue culture.



Native bee collecting pollen from the flowers of Otatea acuminata aztecorum.

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Feature Property

Bellingen Bamboo

aka Big Arse Bamboo

On the Mid North Coast NSW, the Waterfall Way runs west of Bellingen, turns north towards Dorrigo, then continuing west, Darkwood Road follows the Bellinger River to its source.

At the foothills of the Great Dividing Range surrounded by three world heritage listed national parks, Andrew and Toni Usher have established an impressive plantation.

Heading to the property the road passes by houses and stockyards of 100 acre dairy farms common in the area last century. The road then becomes a corridor, curving through massive stands of *Dendrocalamus latiflorus* and *asper-hitam*. Andrew put a lot of thought into the planting with 15m between them, giving them plenty of room for the roots to spread out into the rich volcanic soil. The huge culms head skyward for 20m before the first branch. Then curving outwards forming an arch

with the culms on the opposite side of the road. The dappled light through the canopy has shaded out lantana and privet that would normally grow on the roadside.



Lantana cannot survive in the shade of these giants.

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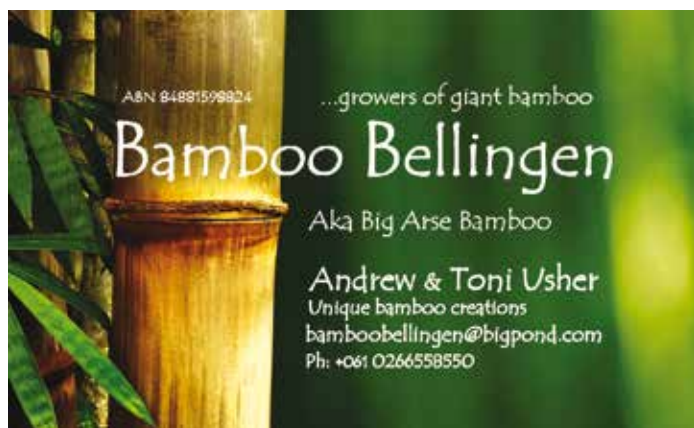
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A permanent creek runs through the property, fed by 1m of rain a year. Bamboo planted next to the creek have reached large dimensions, one stand of *Dendrocalamus latifloras* has over 250 culms. High rainfall has a huge effect on the growth of bamboo, you can also see the result on the surrounding forest, some trees are covered in epiphytes including large staghorn ferns.

From the dense forest, the road passes between two large *Bambusa vulgaris vittata* and opens up to a clearing the size of a football field. On the southern side, protected from the wind and open to the winter sun, is the dwelling and to the right, a large Bhatak, or Sumatran Longhouse built by Donald Corbin, of Bamboo Yurts. Donny has built small bamboo Bhataks as workshops for the Bamboo Society in the past, but nothing like the size of this very impressive structure. Measuring 20m long and 9m tall it is constructed from *Dendrocalamus latifloras* poles.







D. latiflorus is a good species for this type of construction. The thin-walled culms are lighter and easier to work with than the much heavier *D. asper*. A problem which can arise when building with *latiflorus* is the culms are prone to cracking. Special care during curing is essential to stop the culms drying out too quickly. Painting the cut ends to stop rapid moisture loss is recommended.

The covering of the structure, in corrugated iron, fixed by Andrew and his family, has made it weather-proof.

Andrew uses the Bhatak for culm storage and as a workshop where he makes bamboo crafts for the local market.

Bamboo joists covered in split culm flooring on the upper level.



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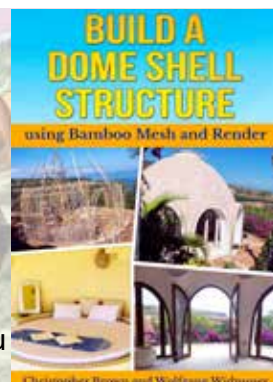
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▲
Alfonse Karr.

◀ *Construction detail of Bhatak.*

▶
Shoots and culms of Alfonse Karr.

There are many different bamboo species in the surrounding forest, some growing better than others. *Black brandisii* was not doing as well as expected, as it is one of the better performers in the heavy clay soils found down on the coast.

Growing at the side of a pathway leading into the forest from the house-paddock is an example of *Bambusa multiplex Alfonse Karr*, with the tops of its fine culms spilling out across the path and into the clearing. Often sold as a hardy bamboo for tough conditions as it can survive in poor soils, it can sometimes become infested with mealybug, leaving black sooty mold on its culms. Planting in damp places where ants cannot live helps. It looks its best when grown in mineral rich soil with high levels of Boron. Some success has been achieved by adding coffee grounds at the base of bamboos affected by mealybug.





Andrew has been experimenting with squaring bamboo and has had some great success on this D. asper Hitam.

The Bamboo Tea Whisk

In Japanese tea ceremonies, Matcha, a tea made from the first harvest of the season from shaded tea bushes, is steamed and air-dried and ground into a powder.

The whisk enables the mixing of Matcha powder, water and air into a frothy beverage, releasing aromas and essences into the foam on the surface. It is not only about dissolving the powder, oxygenation is important.

The whisk is made from a section of bamboo with a node. The top is split into 16 sections, the soft pith cut away and removed, then each section is sliced until there are between 80-100 bristles. Thread is bound between each bristle to form an inner and outer bunch. The end of each outer bristle is combed and curved.









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Bambusa membranacea

also known as
**Dendrocalamus
membranaceus**

Origin: Burma, India, Laos,
Thailand & China

Average Height: 15m

Culm Diameter: 100mm

Minimum Temperature: -4c

membranacea is a lowlands bamboo, found in mixed-deciduous forest, growing in black limestone soils, in areas receiving up to a metre of rainfall per year. It is also tough enough to survive in arid and barren conditions, losing its leaves during drought and quickly recovering when the rain returns.

Originally classified as *Dendrocalamus membranaceus*, even though it had some vegetative characteristics of *Bambusa* (small leaves), in 1997 it was re-classified (Stapleton and Xia 1997), as the flowers displayed characteristics of *Bambusa*.

In the Yunan Province of China *membranacea* is considered economically and ecologically important. It is estimated that there was 70,000 hectares growing in semi-deciduous forest or mono-forest.

It is harvested for its shoots and its heavy-walled culms produce a strong timber. It is pulped for paper making and is also habitat and food for the Asian elephant.

In the past 30 years, the development of tropical agricultural plantations for rubber and tropical fruits has meant the area traditionally comprising stands of *membranacea* have been dramatically reduced. It is estimated that there is less than 30,000 hectares left, with degradation of the quality of the remaining forest, questions have been raised about soil erosion and a decline in biodiversity.

►
Original form introduced into Australia as Dendrocalamus membranaceus has strong, thick-walled, straight culms with fine branching. This form is not closely related to the following forms introduced as seed in 1991, as it did not flower at the same time.





Concern with the over-use of this reserve resulted in a study of 12 populations in Yunan, that found the highest amount of genetic diversity in *membranacea* than in any other species within its genus.

In BB Vol.16 No.2 Durnford Dart of Bamboo Australia described a number of forms he raised from seed handed out by Thai Forestry representatives at the IV Bamboo International Workshop in Changmai.

Within these forms variations in growth habit have been observed. Some will grow a number of fine culms before producing larger culms, a habit seen in some of the large *Dendrocalamus* species, others producing large culms in their second or third year. Shoots of this vigorous form have a blunt tip going on to produce wide, fern-like branches on the culms. The form with the fine culms produces pointed shoots with the culm ending in a pointed branch compliment. In the picture next to the President's report (p.2), of *membranacea Grandis*, a recent introduction from seed, the shoots of this young plant resemble the shoots of the earlier introduced form, but with vivid striping.

References:

C. M. A. Stapleton & N. H. Xia

One of the most spectacular forms introduced as seed in 1991. This open-clumping form has solid culms for at least the first three metres, and wide, fern-like branches.

This form sometimes has striped culms.









Durnford Dart's article (BB16/2) called this one membranacea branch. Its relatively straight culms are not solid like other forms, but still are thick-walled.

In many forms of membranacea lower nodes are branchless, but in membranacea branch lower nodes are heavily branched.



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This slow developing form grows only fine culms for a number of years before producing larger diameters. The culms of this form are solid and the timber very strong, the smaller culms useful to make shovel handles.



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▲ The curved culms of this open clumping form have a very short branch complement giving a dense appearance.

▶ The very distinctive branch clusters on a small culm of membranacea Fineleaf.

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The Resilience of Bamboo

**Wayde & Vicki Crow's property, featured in
Bamboo Bulletin Vol.19 No.1, was impacted by the
2019 bushfires**



In October 2019, a small fire started in the Tappin Tops National Park, burning slowly for weeks in the isolated terrain, it one of 80 fires burning in NSW.

The mild conditions of October came to an end in early November as the strong westerly winds blew the fire east, out of the forest, towards more populated areas. By 8 November it had become unmanageable and the fire tore through the village of Bobin, destroying 18 homes and the public school.

From high up on the escarpment at Elands, a friend of Wayde's could see the fire heading in his direction, the embers leaping forward, sparking fires a kilometre ahead of the blaze.

After the phone call, as Wayde and Vicki prepared to evacuate, their son Aaron turned up and told them to leave immediately as fire was already on the roadside.

An RFS Unit worked during the night to save the house, but the surrounding bamboo plantation was burned. The bamaboo culms were scorched but not burned. The most severely affected was *bambusa Oldhamii*, its soft, pulpy culms collapsed across roads and pathways, the tangled mess making them impassable. This species is often

used along roads due to its erect growth habit but this vulnerability should be considered in any bushfire plan.

Heavy-walled species fared the best, with some stands of *Dendrocalamus asper* developing branches and leaves at the top of blackened culms soon after the fire, the thick culm wood giving some protection to the fine capillaries running through it.

Kenny Lemire of Lucid Space Design offered to buy the poles for use in their festival structures. A container was sourced and delivered to a position near the creek for storage. Wayde began harvesting the poles and loading them into the container, then one night a freak storm hit with a heavy downpour of rain, causing a flash flood. In the morning Wayde found the container was gone. First efforts to locate the container failed, but it was eventually found kilometres away, in a field, on its side, with debris piled up around it. It was retrieved and filled with bamboo.

I have visited Wayde's property since and realised the resilience of some species. Most have not only survived, but thrived after the worst of the fires and floods.



Pictures on the left were taken for the feature article BB Vol.19 No.1 and on the right from the same locations after the fire.

bambusa Oldhamii collapsed across the road.





The fire raced through the nursery, melting pots and burning potting mix.

Plants thought to be lost due to so much damage to the roots, showed signs of life after the heavy rain.







Gigantochloa hetrostachya var. Malay Dwarf Variegated

Origin:	Malaya
Average Height:	3m
Culm Diameter:	25mm
Minimum Temperature:	-2c

A very compact bamboo with thin, straight culms with many fine branches ending in a spray of narrow striped leaves. Its tight, bushy habit makes it an ideal dense screen. A very tough bamboo, adapting to most soils.

Attention must be given to this form as it can revert back to its original form by developing larger culms with bright green leaves without the striping. These should be removed. If left to grow on they will dominate and the variant will die out.

The reverting culms can be divided off by severing the rhizome where it leaves the variant, and grown on to produce the original species.

hetrostachya has culms up to 40mm wide and can grow to 8m. It has mid-sized bright green leaves.



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▲
*The unruly leaf growth habit of the dwarf form
create a dense screen.*
▼

▶
*G. hetrostachya a mid-size bamboo
with bright green leaves.*







Notice of the Bamboo Society of Australia 2021 Annual General Meeting

This year our AGM is being held on Sunday 3rd October, 2021 at Crystal Waters Eco Village, near Maleny.

This meeting is a crucial one. The Society will fold if we don't have enough people to take up positions on the management board.

The proposed schedule is as follows:

10.30 am: Arrival

11 am: AGM

12.00 Bring and share lunch

1 pm: Bamboo tour.

The address is:

44/65 Kilcoy Lane, Condondale.

If you need directions, there is a map here:

<https://crystalwaters.org.au/contact>.


If you'd like to attend the meeting remotely, the Zoom link is in your AGM package that was emailed 26 August.

Looking forward to seeing you on the day.

AGM Sunday 3 October 2021
10:30am



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The False Sarsparilla Vine (Hardenberger Viola), a small-leaved vine often unseen winding its way up the bamboo culms until spring, when it burst into flower, confusing people to believe their bamboo is flowering.

The bamboo is Bambusa oliveriana.

Dendrocalamus asper Hitam

