

Fact sheet 3

PEACEHAVEN: The plant collection

Peacehaven Botanic Park has an excellent collection of Australian native plants, more than half of which are native to the Toowoomba Region.

The park has significant educational value, contributing to knowledge of biodiversity, conservation, heritage and culture.

OVERVIEW

- The original vegetation was blackbutt open forest and vine scrub. About 50 of the original eucalypts and a crows ash remain.
- The park's plant collection has:
 - 226 Australian native species (94% of the collection)
 - 183 species (76%) native to South East Queensland
 - 141 species (59%) native to Toowoomba Region.
- Rare and endangered species, and plants grown from local seed, are key features of the collection.
- Many of the species at Peacehaven are also present in regional parks and bush reserves.
- The plant collection is valuable for biodiversity and Indigenous studies, especially species in the dry rainforest and 'prehistoric' gardens.
- The Friends of Peacehaven maintain a herbarium comprising nearly 600 species.
- Peacehaven has significant educational and conservation value. It is also a showcase for the beauty and resilience of local native plants under cultivation.

ORIGINAL VEGETATION

Peacehaven is on the land of the Jarowair people of the Wakka Wakka nation. The original vegetation was blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*) open forest (bioregion 12.5.6c) with crows ash (*Flindersia australis*) and vine scrub (dry rainforest, bioregion 11.8.3).¹ It was settled by the Kuhl family in the 1870s and partially cleared for dairy farming. In 2004, Stan Kuhl donated about one-third of the original family farm to the local council to be 'preserved as a botanical garden and parkland'.^{2, 3}

About 50 eucalypts remain from the park's original vegetation. These are now known as the Stan Kuhl Gum Trees. Thin-leaved stringy bark (*Eucalyptus eugenioides*) and grey gums (*E. biturbinata*) stand tall at the main entrance of the park and behind the statue of Stan Kuhl. Remnant eucalypts surrounding the Peace Pole include blackbutt (*E. pilularis*), yellow box (*E. melliodora*) and pink bloodwood (*Corymbia intermedia*). There is also an impressive crows ash in the western corner of the park.



Thin-leaved stringy bark and grey gums stand tall near the main entrance.



ENDANGERED PLANTS AND ECOSYSTEMS

The subtropical mountain climate and deep, red soils of the region are well suited to forestry, agriculture, horticulture and urban development. As a result, the once locally common open eucalypt forests and dry rainforests have been drastically reduced and are now classified as endangered ecosystems.

The plant collection at Peacehaven includes 15 species that are rare or endangered. In the park's northern corner, for example, there are 43 specimens of the regionally endemic but rare Bailey's cypress pine (*Callitris baileyi*).

PLANT DIVERSITY

The park's collection includes: 226 Australian native species (94% of the collection); 183 species (76%) native to South East Queensland; and 141 species (59%) native to Toowoomba Region.

Many species at Peacehaven occur in regional parks from the rainforests of

the Ravensbourne area and Bunya Mountains to dry rainforests across the Eastern Downs (e.g. Irongate and Franke Scrub) and local parks with eucalypts (e.g. Charles and Motee Rogers Reserve). Thus, Peacehaven is very relevant to local biodiversity studies.

Within Peacehaven there are dedicated areas displaying different vegetation types. The dry rainforest area, for example, contains 72 native tree and shrub species, almost 90% of which were grown from locally collected seed. Species include brigalow (*Acacia harpophylla*), red jacket (*Alectryon tomentosus*) and crows ash (*Flindersia australis*).

The rainforest area has 71 species including figs (*Ficus* spp.), yellow ash (*Emmenosperma alphitonioides*), tree waratah (*Alloxylon pinnatum*) and black bean (*Castanospermum australe*), as well as epiphytes and understorey plants. The 'prehistoric corner' garden has 17 species including bunya pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*) as well as the endangered Wollemi pine (*Wollemia nobilis*) and Mount Spurgeon pine (*Prumnopitys ladei*).

The *Brachychiton* garden has 28 trees, including hybrids, a Queensland bottle tree (*Brachychiton rupestris*) relocated from a Ravensbourne farm, and the endangered Ormeau bottle tree, *B. sp. Ormeau* (L.H.Bird AQ435851).

Exotic species in the park include: 'Peace' roses from France; jacarandas (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*) and a monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*) from South America; camphor laurel (*Cinnamomum camphora*) from eastern Asia; and kikuyu lawn grass (*Cenchrus clandestinus*) from Africa.

EDUCATIONAL VALUES

School groups and others regularly visit Peacehaven to learn about the region's vegetation, local and Indigenous history, and challenges to biodiversity from land clearing and climate change. Many of the park's trees are labelled with signs giving their scientific and common names, and further projects are under way to enhance garden signs and online information.

Peacehaven is well suited to studies of Indigenous plant use. The Friends maintain a herbarium of almost 600 local species, of which 20% were collected from land around the nearby Indigenous ceremonial site of Gummingurru (5 km west of the park). Forty of these species grow at Peacehaven.

The park is a showcase for the beauty and resilience of native plants in cultivation, and the Friends of Peacehaven's Native Nursery promotes their use in domestic gardens. Native shrubs and herbaceous plants suitable for small home gardens are displayed in front of the nursery.

REFERENCES

1. Queensland Government, Regional ecosystem descriptions: qld.gov.au/environment/plants-animals/plants/ecosystems/descriptions
2. Fact sheet FPBP 1, *Peacehaven: a short history*, May 2024
3. Agreement signed between Stanley Kuhl and Crows Nest Shire Council, December 2004

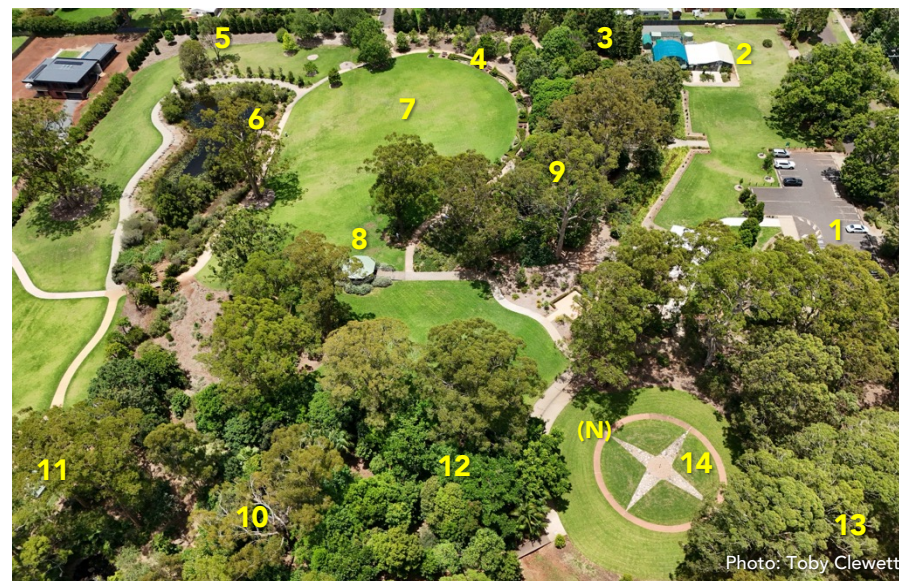


Photo: Toby Clewett

Peacehaven gardens and features: 1. Main entrance and car park; 2. Nursery; 3. 'Prehistoric' garden; 4. Brachychiton garden; 5. Bailey's cypress trees; 6. Lake; 7. Central lawn; 8. Rotunda; 9. Dry rainforest; 10. Wattles and frog pond; 11. Crows ash tree and playground; 12. Rainforest; 13. Remnant eucalypt forest; 14. Peace garden with Peace Pole and compass points. (Total area of park: 5.3 ha)