



WALK THROUGH THE

*Dreamtime
Gardens*

THAT FED THE

DINOSAURS



Wouldn't it be exciting to touch and smell plants that, once upon a time, fed the dinosaurs and generated so many of the local mystical dreamtime stories?

WORDS by Roy Weavers

Well, very soon that's exactly what you will be able to do and you'll be able to do it just up the road from Port Douglas in the heart of Mossman!

The plan is to build a world class botanic garden housing as many indigenous flora as the 50 acre site can hold. The gardens are being designed to take you on a themed journey through amazing tropical wetlands, rainforest and tropical gardens. The flora will be protected while being presented to the public in an easy to understand and easy to view venue that will become a global focus for our area. It will generate an unequalled education and research centre to ensure all medical, scientific and research organisations can have easy access to this unique region

The gardens, with the help of the aboriginal community, will tell the fascinating story of the evolution of the area's plant life and ancient culture. It will trace the prehistoric species that are still thriving, many of which helped feed the dinosaurs some 180 million years ago. The garden's journey meanders through the wet tropics taking in the wetlands, ancient rainforest and on through breathtaking floral displays that will make it easy to enjoy the species within our modern Daintree Rainforest and River region.

How wonderful will it be to wander through these incredible gardens and experience the world as the dinosaurs saw it and share the flora that the earliest aboriginal people enjoyed some 50,000 years ago. Whilst we may not be able to bring you the dinosaurs, something to do with health and safety I'm told, we are thrilled to be able to say that the ancestors of the original Ku Ku Yalanji people will indeed be helping to guide visitors around the gardens and ensure they are embraced by their fascinating heritage.

The Mossman Botanic Garden has so far taken over six years from the initial dream of six Mossman locals to the purchase of the site upon which it will be built to the creation of the project masterplan.

Board Chairman John Sullivan says that "The first stage of the Mossman Botanic Garden masterplan has been a hard road to tread. Before a single plant can be planted or a public building can be built the groundwork to clear the site must be completed to ensure the infrastructure for water supply, drainage, sewage and structural foundations is in place."

The fundraising activities are in full swing with a number of sizeable donations already coming from both the private and corporate sectors. Private memberships have been pouring in since the supporter scheme opened this year demonstrating the enthusiasm of the local community for the project. Presentations are being made to help other supportive community groups as well as the general public become involved with the fundraising. The presentations are designed to illustrate how the gardens can assist their own groups benefit from association with this, 'soon to be,' global attraction.

Chairman Sullivan said: "It is easy to see the frustration from the interested and very enthusiastic general public at what appears to be slow progress but there is a process that has to be followed to ensure the public and the environment is protected and whilst we are on top of that, it all takes time."

"The future is as exciting as the past and present, with plans for education and science to work together at the gardens"

He continued: "We have a brilliant masterplan designed by local consultants LA3 to create what will be a phenomenal and quite unique attraction and as soon as we have raised the first \$5 to \$10 million we need for the initial groundwork we will get the spades in the ground. Please take five minutes to view our website to check out the video garden fly through (www.mossmanbotanicgarden.com.au)"

Federal MP for Leichhardt Warren Entsch has been an ardent supporter of the project from Day One helping the group to purchase the site with the aid of Federal funding. And

he has recently made it clear that there would be more financial support available to supplement the board's fundraising activities at the appropriate time.

Mayor Julia Leu and the Douglas Shire Council are also keen supporters of the garden project because it ticks so many of the boxes within their business development strategy including employment, training, increased interest in the area and tourist opportunities in co-operation with existing venues such as the Mossman Gorge and the many tour companies who focus their activities on the rainforest heritage of our shire.

The first stage of phase one will be an area for the public to enjoy in the form of traditional yarning circles with inspirational, surrounding planting. The idea is to make these public areas the quintessential heart of the community providing people with a chance to enjoy the seated areas and encourage residents to get together as often as they can.

The current board of directors, which still includes three of the original 'dreamers' of the project, are excited at the prospect of being able to help bring this dream to reality. There is obviously a huge amount of work still to do but under chairman John Sullivan's guidance the board is really gaining traction and their enthusiasm combined with the ever-growing garden membership ensures the venue will soon be taking a tangible shape.

The board and its enthusiastic group of growing supporters are working hard drawing new members to the botanic gardens project offering compelling benefits and incentives to ensure all local, national and international visitors to our shire can't wait to help ensure this wonderful dream comes true.

The importance of the gardens is easy to comprehend. As a showcase to presenting the World Heritage Daintree Rainforest and river region it's probably enough for most visitors to appreciate and understand but the dream of the board goes much wider.

After the last ice age most plant and animals were destroyed and therefore lost. Some, however, miraculously managed to survive. The Daintree has therefore become especially precious because a few of those pre ice age plant species survived but only in this region and amazingly they are still here in hidden and often difficult to get to areas. The gardens can help this fragile eco-system. It can ensure that whatever pollution mankind can throw at these species, their survival is guaranteed by creating a reserve bank of seeds and plants within its facilities. This will ensure survival, study and research of this special flora is easily available for the scientific world. This selfless philosophy will be applied under strictly controlled quarantine facilities to ensure the



gathering of knowledge and the application of that knowledge to the benefit of the global environment.

The gardens will become a sanctuary for the region's flora and when combined with the ancient tribal stories that complement their gradual evolution it will be a haven for all to enjoy. Such a haven will be quite unique.

The future is as exciting as the past and present with plans for education and science to work together at the gardens to ensure nothing is missed in harnessing medicines, research and development on a truly co-operative global scale. Already many of the established botanical gardens of the world such as The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, Singapore Botanic Garden and Montreal Botanical Garden, Canada, are keen to see this project come to fruition because our rainforests are

so valuable and their study is invaluable for the sustainability of the global environment.

The journey ensures that no matter how many times you visit, each time will be different as the gardens mature and this treasure trove of nature takes its course.

So, don't miss out on this wonderful opportunity to be in at the birth of the dream. Become a member. Your annual membership fee will bring the dream that much closer. And don't forget you will also be able to deservedly claim the bragging rights to declare, "I am a founder member".

To get involved visit

www.mossmanbotanicgarden.com.au



Mossman Botanic Gardens Site Overview on the Mossman-Daintree Road