

Wild/flower Women II: Art, Environment & Activism



ACTIVITY BOOKLET

 **Sunshine Coast**
COUNCIL | Caloundra Regional
GALLERY



LEARNING HOW TO SEE

LEARNING ABOUT OUR NATIVE WILDFLOWERS

Kathleen McArthur started drawing and painting wildflowers after she realised she could not name the wildflowers that she found growing in her local area.

Through looking closely, she learnt to see the specific details of petal shape and number, to investigate the fine stamen, seeds and pods, to understand the patterns of leaves and how they grew off the stem or branch.

What do you 'see' when you look at this example of the plant and then Kathleen's work? Can you name and describe different parts of the flower? What shapes, lines and patterns can you see? Describe what you see, the number and shape of the petals



Wedding Bush (*Ricinocarpus pinifolius*)

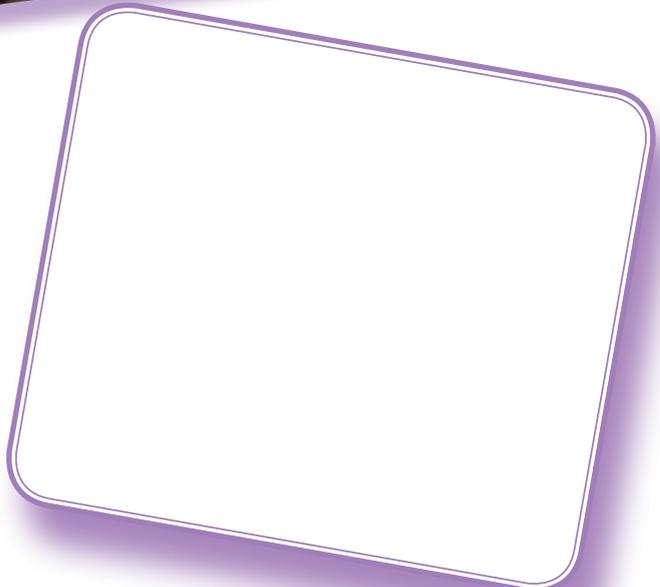
WHAT CAN YOU SEE?

Can you look closely, just as Kathleen McArthur did? Can you see all the different parts of this wildflower? Can you draw them below?



Milkmaids (*Burchardia umbellata*)

Your drawing
here →



ABOUT BOTANICAL ART

Long before there were cameras in every phone and tablet device, the only way that people could document the flowers and plants they discovered was through observation and recording the visual appearance simply with pencil, paper and often watercolour paints.

Botanical artists were included in the teams for major expeditions. Sydney Parkinson was the artist who sailed on the Endeavour with Joseph Banks and Ferdinand Bauer was the artist who circumnavigated Australia with Matthew Flinders on the Investigator. In fact many people including Kathleen McArthur believe that Bauer was among the greatest of all botanical artists!

Many women also engaged in painting wildflowers and botanical style art in the 19th century as it was regarded as a suitable pastime for a 'lady'. Some of these 'ladies' helped Australian botanist Frederick von Mueller in his endeavours to document the flora of Australia, and he even advertised in newspapers in regional Australia, calling for help from women collectors. Some of these were also artists, and one who became particularly well known was Ellis Rowan.

In botanical art (of the Bauer tradition) as well as capturing intricate detail of what is visible, there are often extra illustrations near the bottom of the work that include 'dissections' and enlarged details.

While Kathleen McArthur's work followed in the tradition of botanical art, with her having a concern to accurately capture the nature and detail of the flower and the plant, she did not only do this for scientific classification purposes, but more to help people learn to 'see' and love our native flowers.

Swamp Banksia
(*Banksia robur*)



Rusty Banksia
(*Banksia oblongifolia*)

WHAT IS THE WALLUM?

The term wallum comes from an Aboriginal word, reported to be used to describe the *Banksia Amuella*, the tallest banksia and plant that tends to grow in the coastal heathlands. The word then came to refer to the actual heathlands themselves.

These areas have been undervalued by many people, perhaps because they are low-lying (and not featuring the towering grandeur of rainforests) and often backed by paperbark 'swamps', however, the coastal heathlands are remarkable for many reasons. They have:

- Sandy soils with poor nutrients but supports a diversity of plants and wildlife.
- High acidity level (can be almost as acid as a car battery).
- The diversity of the plants that grow there have adapted to this particular environment.

The wallum is a special habitat and many plants that grow here cannot easily be cultivated or grown again once cleared.

Quiz:

Which of these native plants grow in the wallum of the Sunshine Coast?

Name of plant	Botanical name	Yes / No
Tulip	<i>Tulipa</i>	
Sturt's Desert Pea	<i>Swainsona formosa</i>	
Prickly Moses	<i>Acacia hubbardiana</i>	
Flannel Flower	<i>Actinotus helianthi</i>	
Wedding Bush	<i>Ricinocarpus pinifolius</i>	
Daffodil	<i>Narcissus</i>	
Vanilla Lily	<i>Sowerbaea juncea</i>	

A CONTEMPORARY VIEW

Can you see the work of four contemporary artists in this exhibition? Their names are Marvene Ash, Shannon Garson, Anne Harris and Ulrike Sturm.

They have responded in a variety of ways to the world around them, and to the wallum in particular.

Choose a work by one of the contemporary artists which shows a wallum plant. Can you draw a picture of their artwork or the plant in the space below? Write the name of the plant, if you know it.



USING PLANT FIBRES

String is an incredibly useful thing, and the Gubbi Gubbi people's history of making string goes back over 32,000 years. A common fibre that was used to make string for nets, boats and weapons in the Sunshine Coast region was from the Cotton Tree (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*). The bark of the plant is used for string: when the bark is taken off the tree, the inner and outer bark are separated. The fibre needs to be soaked in water for up to a week before it is dried and ready to use as string.

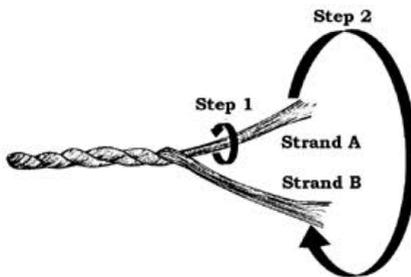
The basic technique for making string is to twist two sets of fibres together, to make a long string or rope that ends up being stronger than the separate parts it is made of.

In this exhibition, contemporary artist Anne Harris works with string. Anne says that some simple string-making skills can be learned in a few minutes.

Materials you can use to make string:

- Fine Fabric torn into 10mm strips
- Paper Napkins torn into 15-20mm strips
- Bark or Inner Bark of plants (e.g. Cotton Tree)
- Leaves that have long fibres (*Lomandra longifolia*)

Basic Technique :



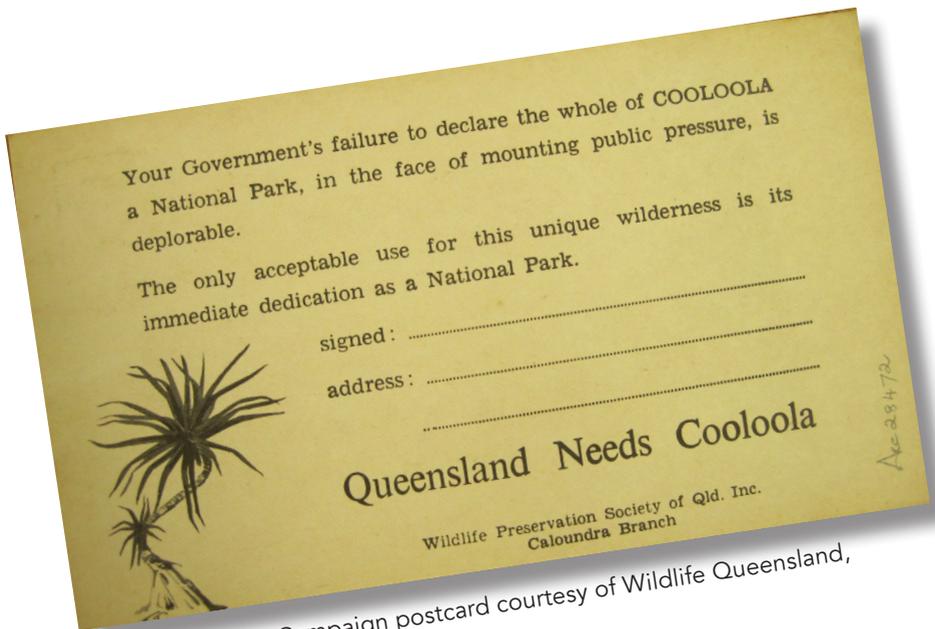


Anne Harris uses plants in many ways.

ART AND ACTION

Most of the National Parks and Reserves we appreciate today were established because of the lobbying and actions of individuals such as Kathleen McArthur, often working as part of a group (in her case the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland).

Kathleen McArthur led a major campaign in the 1960s that eventually resulted in the establishment of Coolooloa National Park. As part of the campaign she designed a postcard, and 100,000 of them were sent out around the country. People were encouraged to send them in to the Premier of Queensland.



Coolooloa Campaign postcard courtesy of Wildlife Queensland, Sunshine Coast Branch

Answer to Quiz on page 6:
The native plants that grow on the Sunshine Coast wallum are Prickly Moses, Wedding Bush and the Vanilla Lily.

Kathleen's friend and colleague Margaret Thorsborne created her own novel way to use art to promote a message too.

Margaret campaigned to stop the killing of the Torresian Pigeon (or Nutmeg Pigeon) which people were shooting each year at roosting season, even though it was protected. She has also lobbied to protect the habitat that native birds need to survive, and is well known for campaigning to save the cassowary.

One of the ways Margaret would convey her message was through her handpainted envelopes where she often included a painting of a native bird, along with a simple message.

ACTIVITY

Can you think of a message you'd like to send to decision makers about the wallum, our native wildlife or the environment? Use the box below to write or draw your message.



A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a purple border, intended for the student to write or draw their message.

IMAGE CREDITS

- Cover LHS: 'Vanilla Lilies' - Sowerbea Juncea. Kathleen McArthur 1961, courtesy of Hugh McArthur
RHS: Vanilla Lilies. Ulrike Sturm 2016
- Page 1 LHS: Wedding Bush. Photograph by Sue Davis 2018
RHS: 'Wedding Bush' - Rcinocarpus pinifolius. Kathleen McArthur
- Page 3 Milkmaids - Burchardia umbellata. Photo by Sue Davis 2018
- Page 5 Top: Swamp Banksia. Photograph by Sue Davis 2018
Below: Rusty Banksia. Kathleen McArthur 1981
- Page 9 String and plant work. Anne Harris 2018
- Page 10 Cooloola Campaign postcard courtesy of Wildlife Queensland, Sunshine Coast Branch
- Page 11 Cassowaries need rainforest. Margaret Thorsborne 1980, courtesy of Fryer Library, UQ



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Caloundra Regional Gallery.

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