



You would all be aware of the report in our September Newsletter, that our member, Maureen Schmitt won Category 5, The Gwendy Hansford Environmental Award which is for Outstanding service by an individual or an affiliated club to the Environment. Gardening Clubs of Australia are the proud sponsor of this National award!

*Nominee should have shown an active, inspiring and committed role in protecting the local environment i.e. residential or public area, demonstrated their ability to communicate and educate the public in the understanding of environmental issues; and been involved in activities such as Bushcare or bushland regeneration or similar i.e. residential or public area.*

Maureen will receive this award at our October meeting. Joy Dukes, the Director of Publicity, Promotions & Events for Gardening Clubs of Australia, will present Maureen with her trophy.

Also present will be the Mayor, Mr. Jack Dempsey, Councillor John Learmonth and Ray Johnson, President of Gin Gin Landcare and past President of our Club.

Below is the information that was submitted regarding Maureen's nomination for the award!

*Maureen is not sure that having such commitment to the environment is a good or a bad thing. It's good because it gives her great enjoyment when in the bush because she can identify most of the plants, birds and animals. The down-side is that she can also identify all the invasive weed plants, notices all the destruction and sees and feels bad about all the rubbish. With this she feels she should be pulling weeds and picking up rubbish wherever she goes - and she usually does!*

*Maureen's first involvement with environmental advocacy was in the 1980's when she joined the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) firstly in Ingham then in Cairns. Upon return to her hometown of Bundaberg, she almost immediately became secretary and then President of WPSQ Bundaberg which she was until its closing in 2017.*

*A similar story exists with Bundaberg and District Urban Landcare as it was called back then. She first became secretary and then President and Project Officer. She also did a stint as secretary of Kolan Landcare group as it was then called.*

*Driving around Bundaberg, Maureen can point to many revegetated plots of land whether at Burnett Heads, Elliott Heads, Baldwin Swamp or the Hummock where she organised tree planting events. Some were planted by school children and/or the community during National Tree Day tree plantings she organised.*

*A large area at the Hummock near Bundaberg that was destined for sub-division became one of her largest tree planting plots and in recognition the park was named in her honour viz. "Maureen Schmitt Park". During that time Maureen ran working bees and produced a monthly newsletter to raise awareness about the plight of the remaining dry rain forest around Bundaberg. During that time she produced 2 small publications titled "Conservation of Woongarra Scrub Remnants" and "Conservation of Isis Scrub Remnants".*

*During her time with Landcare and WPSQ, Maureen gave numerous walks and talks around the district including walks through the Wallum Wildflower Reserve, Baldwin Swamp Conservation Park and the Hummock Vine Forest reserve. For each of these talks she would produce a plant list so as to teach attendees the names of at least a few of the plants.*

*Now in her early seventies, Maureen still advocates for respect and protection of the environment and is a regular writer to the Bundaberg Regional Council, the Bundaberg Today newspaper and government. She organises and runs Clean Up Australia Day events at McCoys Creek near where she lives and also organises, almost monthly, roadside and creek clean-ups whenever she identifies rubbish building up. These rubbish build-ups usually occur after rain events when rubbish gets washed down drains and creeks and she dreads the thought of them ending up in the ocean and impacting on our marine life.*

*She is particularly meticulous about small items such as cigarette butts or pieces of silver paper as she knows how bad these items are in the oceans.*

*Maureen has been donating weekly to Bush Heritage Trust for around 20 years and has volunteered on one of their reserves in North Queensland doing weed removal and plant identification. She has also volunteered on Fraser Island with Greening Australia doing similar work. She also donates weekly to Greenpeace to help protect our oceans.*

*She has been a member of the Bundaberg Regional Council Community Conservation Advisory Group since its inception and has been involved with Bundaberg Organic Gardeners for much of its existence since 2014. She just completed a three year term as President. She says organic gardening is another area where she can protect the environment by advocating against the use of harmful chemicals.*

*Maureen she remembers that with Paralympian Tracy Oliver they planted trees at CQ University as part of Olympic Landcare in 2000. In 1991 Bundaberg Landcare needed a representative and Maureen put her hand up and was President, Secretary or a general member for over 20 years.*

*“We planted trees at lots of places around Bundaberg such as the Hummock, Baldwin Swamp, Smiths Crossing and Kalkie. We are trying to give our native animals and birds somewhere to live. People take our wildlife for granted until it’s all gone and then it’s too late” she said.*

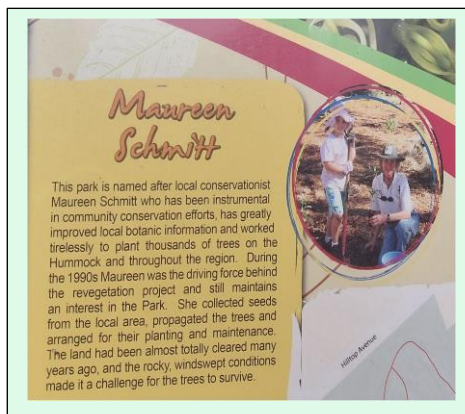
*At the Hummock we had monthly working bees and tree plants until the westward facing site was completed. National Tree Planting Days were organised as were school planting days. At the request of a volunteer, we left a small area unplanted for the small grass-feeding birds such as finches and wrens. From memory, Mayor of then Burnett Shire Cr. Bill Niebecker and even the Minister for the Environment, Hon. Pat Comben planted a tree each.*

*In recognition of the outcome achieved, a Burnett Shire Councillor suggested the Park be named the “Maureen Schmitt Park” in recognition of the work involved. This was adopted by Council.*

*Maureen is saddened what is being done to the natural environment, but she feels there is still hope to turn things around with education and advocacy.*

*“As a dedicated environmentalist, I embrace the idea of not placing chemicals into our environment because of the short and long term damage they cause. Hence the connection to organic gardening, which aims to work with nature rather than trying to conquer and control it. One of my biggest regrets is not making the time to devote to my garden. However, despite this, it still provides me with an assorted range of fruits and vegetables for which I am extremely grateful and a place where I can feel relaxed and at home!”*

Congratulations Maureen on receiving this prestigious award!



Maureen Schmitt Park

