

Third Time Lucky

Path parallel to Elliott Road



This is a small yet robust tree growing at the top of a sand dune in the southern section of Trigg Bushland, along a path running roughly parallel to Elliott Road.

This tree has been very badly damaged by fire. The main trunk managed to stay alive, however, issuing a number of fresh shoots to replace the growing tip about 2 metres off the ground.

Every one of them, however, has died. The different diameters of the dead growing tips indicates that they were killed at different times. One possible culprit could be the Tuart Longicorn Beetle, which may have infested each regrowth, killing it, and then infesting the next regrowth.

Tuart Longicorn Beetle prefers branches of a medium to small size, generally less than two hand spans. It can ringbark the branch and kill the branch or even the whole tree. There will often be a pair of holes where the bark has been worn away, one above the other, indicating where the beetle has entered to pupate. The purpose of the second hole is not known - it may be a strategy to confuse predators.

Tuart longicorn beetle is not as prevalent at the present time as they were 20 years ago – they may only be widespread on a cyclical basis.

Having exhausted its resources in the main trunk, this persistent tuart then re-sprouts from the base, where it has a semi-lignotuber. The new branches are successful and healthy, providing two main trunks to what was once a single trunked tree. The resulting odd appearance amply illustrates this Tuart's ability to survive!

Race after Fire

Across from St Mary's School



This part of Trigg Bushland along Jeanes Road was badly burned several years ago. *Acacia rostellifera* burns hot, and so this part of the bush was reduced to bare ground.

This acacia has underground runners, so after a fire it comes up quickly and flourishes, as the underground runners provide immediate nutrients. With an instant food supply it can outpace other plants that must sprout from seed and develop new roots, like Tuart trees.

Under these circumstances, a Tuart will have difficulty keeping pace, and will be robbed of light and quickly smothered.

But if a Tuart can manage to get its crown above its competitors, it will put on a growth spurt that is hard to stop. This small group of Tuart trees across from St Mary's are winning the race against the acacia, and are set to develop into fine trees one day.

Where did the seed come from? There are no other Tuart trees nearby. No doubt before the fire there was one at the top of the sand dune. Seed would have rolled down the hill, stopping at a spot where moisture collects at the bottom of the hill. And the extra moisture is possibly the key to why these are the only surviving Tuart seedlings in this part of Trigg Bushland.

The Missing Tree

Southern path, Duart Arnott



This is a large and vigorous tree in the southern section of the Duart/Arnott section of Trigg Bushland. However, the arrangement of the branches tells of a major catastrophe earlier in its life.

The main trunk is decayed and broken. What killed the main trunk? It is not possible to tell for sure, but is very likely to be fire.

The main trunk provides another clue— it is leaning markedly to the east, away from salt laden winds, which come from the Trigg beach area to the west. Small amounts of salt in the wind will kill Tuart buds, and the Tuart tree will use a number of strategies to minimise contact with salt.

There could be another story to that leaning trunk. Sometimes two Tuart seedlings will germinate in close proximity. If one is a little older, it will have a head start and, being taller, will get the larger share of light and nutrients. Over time, the younger tree will lean away from the older tree to find its own share of sunlight.

If that is what happened here, then mankind may have intervened. It is possible that the older tree has been removed from this scene – perhaps it was just where people walk today. If the older Tuart was removed to make the pathway, then the younger Tuart suddenly had more room, more nutrients, and more sunlight. The younger Tuart could then respond by sending up more branches from its base to fill in the gaps.