arfnews

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Working with the weather is never an easy task

During the dry season in the Daintree rainforest, which usually runs from April to December, the ARF works hard at rehabilitating the many rainforest blocks it has acquired.

However, by the time September comes around, 36 degree days and high humdity makes tree planting more difficult. It is during the September to December period that the Foundation starts seed collecting for the next year's planting and keeps on top of the never ending weed control, site and machinery maintenance.

The July to September period this year saw a new milestone achieved with Angsana Great Barrier Reef Resort (part of the Banyan Tree Group) planting its 10,000th tree in the Daintree on ARF land; and the Westpac Bank group from Far North Queensland came back to plant another 200 trees on their growing rainforest reserve at Cape Tribulation.

Westpac Bank staff from Far North Queensland plant another 200 trees at Cape Tribulation. Note the extensive weed infestation either side of the planting strip. This has been sprayed and will be mulched into the soil before the next planting. From left to right are Andrea Davey, Greg Rolls, Narelle Djuve, Kate Adams, Mark Tognola, Rob Blank, Matt Wall and Tae Jostsons

Dutch intern a great help

ARF was pleased to offer Dutch student, Kirsten Shouten a four week internship in August as part of her tertiary environmental studies course she is undertaking in Holland.

Kirsten spent much of her time at ARF field headquarters in the Daintree and is seen here planting one of 60 rainforest trees on behalf of her friends back home.

Angsana staff start planting another 2,000 trees. The site is quite flat as it was once an orchard. ARF removed 21 coconut plams and a number of non-native fruit trees before weed control and site preparation. Thanks to the Angsana team we managed to plant 2,016 trees on the day.

New planting method trialed

Digging holes by hand, or even using an auger, can take a long time, especially when you have to plant thousands of trees.

ARF Conservation Officer, Adrian "Golly" Watson uses a single tine ripper on the back of the 'Old Ford' to create a small contour trench into which trees can be planted. As the trench subsides, moisture and rain is directed along the contours to the newly planted trees.

Thanks to our many donors, the 'Old Ford' has been reconditioned and lives to help ARF plant another 10,000 trees.

Preparing for the next 2,000 trees

Rehabilitating our rainforest is not a simple matter. Unlike many dry forests, we need to plant between 80 and 150 different tree species on the rehabilitation site.

After all, rainforests are mega-diverse ecosystems. In one hectare of Daintree rainforest we have identified over 250 different tree species. Compare that to the fact that in the whole of the North American continent there are less than 120 different tree species.

ARF collects seeds and grows most of the trees needed for rehabilitation of the rainforest in the ARF nursery. This occurs mainly in the December to April period, or what is usually our 'wet' season.

Did you know that the Daintree rainforest can get over 3 meters of rainfall in a year? That's more that 132 inches of rain in the old measure.

These seedlings were grown from seeds collected in the rainforest. They spend two months in the Foundation's nursery before sun hardening in the outside area. These plants are almost too big for their pots and are on the way to being planted in one of the ARF's rehabilitation sites

Is this the world's rarest tree?

The Ribbonwood tree (idiospermun australiense) is one of the oldest trees on the planet, having survived in the Daintree rainforest for over 120 million years.

Discovered in the late 19th century and once thought to be extinct, this plant is now grown in the ARF nursery and used in the rehabilitation of a number of rainforest blocks.

An early morning visitor to the ARF nursery. This young cassowary wanders through the ARF headquarters looking for native fruits.

Many of the trees planted in the rehabilitation sites are chosen because they provide fruit for the endangered cassowary.

New cancer drug a step closer

Who knows what these seeds may provide for future generations?

A chemical extracted from the seed of a tropical rainforest tree found in the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland has the potential to revolutionize the treatment of cancer in companion animals and possibly humans.

The successful trial of the rainforest chemical EBC-46, to treat solid tumors with rapid healing of the tumor site and no significant side effects, has been celebrated not only by veterinarians and animal lovers but has been held up by the ARF as a key reason for the protection, extension and recovery of Australia's rainforests.

Dr. Victoria Gordon, CEO of EcoBiotics, who was part of the team that discovered the drug, says that human trials of the anti-cancer drug are a step closer with more and more paperwork being lodged here and in the USA.

ARF Chairman David Butler said the discovery of EBC-46 is proof that rainforests have exceptional value, not just as enormous stores of greenhouse gasses but also as a natural pharmacy of future medicines.

It is now expected that EBC-46 will go to trials for use on humans in Australia in 2012. Further information can be found at www.qbiotics.com