

Aquilaria Update Australia

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First Edition—*Aquilaria Update Australia*

Welcome to the first edition of *Aquilaria Update Australia*.

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a link for all those with a passion or interested in the tropical tree of the *Aquilaria* genus and its valuable wood product Agarwood.

The editor will release a newsletter twice a year, being Spring and Autumn editions, however we might find there is a great demand for more information and additional editions may eventuate.

Wescorp Agarwood's manager Grant Pronk will be responsible for the coordination of the newsletter and welcomes readers to provide feedback as to what will make this newsletter work and be of real value.

Our mailing list comprises of individuals that are dealing with *Aquilaria* in one way or another. This includes, growers, foresters, nurserymen, plantation service providers, botanists, research scientists,

traders, end consumers and no doubt there will be more.



Grant Pronk with a 2.5 year old tree at the Coulthard's property in Mossman.

Readers are also more than welcome to contribute articles or photos to the newsletter that they consider interesting for other readers.

With any developing industry the gathering and sharing of ideas and experience can be an extremely valuable way to move forward quickly.

Considering *Aquilaria* trees have only been in Australia for less than five years we all have a lot to learn. This newsletter will be part of the process to assist with the learning.

I look forward to the learning experience and pioneering this exciting new industry for Australia with you.

**Editor - Grant Pronk
Wescorp Agarwood.**

Seeds Germinating

Wescorp Agarwood imported 10 kg of *Aquilaria crassna* seed from Vietnam in July.

The seeds were delivered to the Mad About Plants nursery and with the combined skills of Darryl and Sophie the germination is looking very good.

Seedlings are expected to be ready for planting in time for the next wet season. Purchase enquiries can be made to Grant Pronk.

Strong germination after 4 weeks from picking seed from trees in Vietnam.



Wescorp's Executive Chairman with a healthy, stout *Aquilaria* tree at Dr Mike McAuliffe's plantation in Lake Eacham.

Aquilaria Points of Interest

- THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 3000 AQUILARIA CRASSNA SEEDS PER KILOGRAM
- CURRENTLY SEED FROM 4 SPECIES OF THE AQUILARIA GENUS IS PERMITTED TO ENTER AUSTRALIA BY AQIS - YES, AQUILARIA CRASSNA IS ONE OF THE FOUR
- THE 10 KG OF SEED IMPORTED BY WESCORP AGARWOOD WAS FUMIGATED ON ENTRY AT BRISBANE AIRPORT. THE TREATMENT INCLUDED METHYL BROMIDE AND PHOSHINE
- IT IS WIDELY REPORTED THAT AQUILARIA SEED HAS A SHELF LIFE OF AROUND 2 WEEKS. WESCORP AGARWOOD IS CURRENTLY TESTING THIS THEORY

What Did Tropical Cyclone Yasi Deliver ?

The devastation associated with Tropical Cyclone Yasi will remain with many Queenslanders for years to come. The plus 300 km per hour winds together with abrasive rain will damage most things, including trees.

The degree of damage to *Aquilaria* plantations across NFAQ varied according to the strength of the winds encountered.

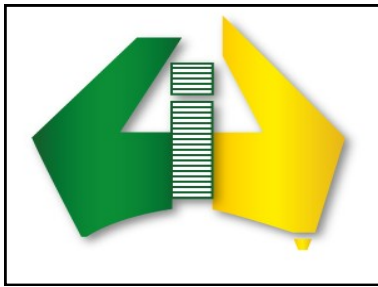
Two plantations in Silkwood were severely damaged by 300 km per hour winds and

rain. One small trial plantation was completely destroyed and the other suffered a 70% tree loss. The damage was a combination of either trees snapping at the roots or massive outer stem damage caused by abrasive wind whipped rain.

Plantation damage decreased significantly the further away from the eye of the cyclone. The Boulders plantation near Babinda suffered only very minor wind damage, less than 5 % loss.

Wind blown tree at Babinda





W E S C O R P A G A R W O O D

Wescorp Agarwood Manager
Grant Pronk
040 988 2280
grant@wescorp.com.au

Wescorp Offices
26 Coulson Way
Canning Vale
Western Australia 6155

Postal Address
PO Box 1298
Canning Vale
Western Australia 6970

**Our Website has
more Agarwood
information and
photos, check it out**

www.wescorp.com.au



Dr Tony Page participating at a Agarwood conference in Thailand during March 2007. This conference set the realization of a potential agarwood industry based in Australia.

Wescorp is an Australian company based in Perth. The company has a long history of processing and selling sandalwood into the world's many and diverse market places.

Wescorp is the largest supplier of sandalwood in the world and has the responsibility of processing and marketing all of the government owned sandalwood harvested from Crown land in Western Australia.

Tim Coakley is the Executive Chairman of the Wescorp Group of Companies, Tim has a long history and strong passion with all things sandalwood. His passion spread into Agarwood several years ago and now Wescorp Agarwood is Australia's premier Agarwood company. Agarwood has similar uses to sandalwood however it is more valuable.

In June 2011 long time sandalwood forester and government forestry sectional manager Grant Pronk joined the Wescorp Group of Companies to head up Wescorp Agarwood. Tim is assured Grant's appointment will provide the developing Australian agarwood industry with another level of commitment and professionalism to take the industry forward.

Look out for caterpillars...

As with all plants, *Aquilaria* has its fair share of insects that feed upon it. In the last three years there has been several insect invasions in *Aquilaria* plantations in Queensland.

The first of the significant invasions was by the Spur Throated locust in Mossman in 2009. The swarm of locusts gradually moved from soybean fallow crops into the *Aquilaria* and proceeded to eat the trees bark and foliage.

The swarm was controlled through the use of Chlorpyrifos, however sections of the plantation were destroyed and an infill programme was required.

Dr Tony Page from JCU has advised that monitoring and treating of locusts in fallow crops should prevent this type of incident happening in the future.

A more recent intruder into the plantations in the Babinda area is the aptly

named *Aquilaria* moth (*Heortia vitessoides*). It is not so much the moth but its larvae (caterpillars) that are very damaging to *Aquilaria*.

This species of moth is found throughout parts of Asia where it is also a significant pest but is controlled.

The caterpillars cluster in the leaves of the trees and will quickly eat leaves and young bark. The cluster can completely defoliate and kill seedlings and young trees.

Hundreds of trees can be destroyed if the caterpillars go unchecked.

Effective treatment to date has been with the application of the biological pesticide Gemstar. This pesticide is not harmful to most other insects in the plantations.

The caterpillars appear to be most active in Spring and Autumn, however populations have been found during Winter.

Keep a look out for them !

A cluster of Aquilaria caterpillars feeding on a tree at Babinda. A web like material provides a transport



Dr Tony Page is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow based at the James Cook University (JCU) in Cairns, Tony is already well known by many *Aquilaria* growers that have witnessed Tony's establishment of growth trials and monitoring.

A research agreement between JCU and Wescorp Agarwood has seen Tony actively involved in *Aquilaria* research for a number of years. Tony's latest research work will include selecting trees with superior qualities for a cloning programme and also trialing soil additives to improve root and stem growth. Tony is a fantastic attribute to the industry.