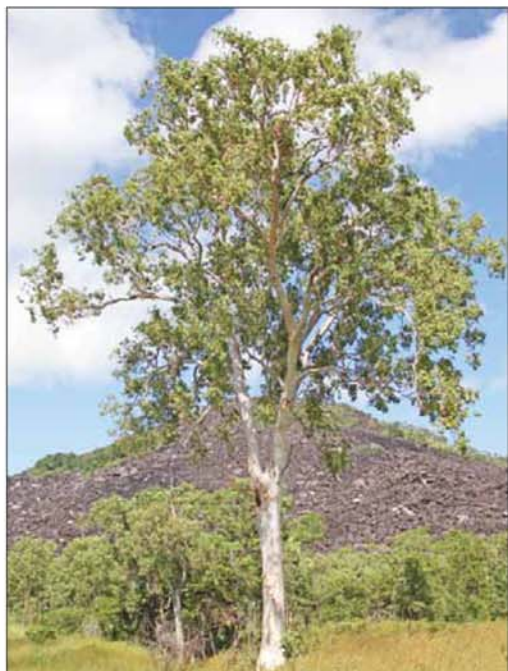


Cooktown's two new national champions



Top: A new Australian champion – the Gum – poplar – *Eucalyptus platyphlla*.

Below: Derek McIntosh, measuring the circumference of the gum (*Eucalyptus platyphlla*). Photos: GARY HUTCHISON.



COOKTOWN has two new national champions.

But they are not athletes, academics or industry representatives.

They're trees.

A Pacific Almond (*Terminata catappa*), in the Cooktown Botanic Gardens, was first nominated for a place in the *National Register of Big Trees, Australia's Champion Trees*, by Cook Shire Council Parks and Gardens Manager Jim Doidge in 2009.

But the Register's founder and co-ordinator Derek McIntosh was unable to come to Cooktown until a fortnight ago for verification of the almond's specifications.

And it was during that visit, Jim suggested a Gum (*Eucalyptus platyphlla*), situated about 500 metres north of the Black Mountain lookout on the Mulligan Highway might also qualify for championship status.

So, with his trusty tape measure and laser measuring device, Derek inspected both specimens and has since anointed them as the Australian champions in their respective species.

"I heard about the Register, and in my job I see some marvellous trees of all varieties," Jim Doidge said.

"So I nominated the almond, since saw the gum and thought 'why not'?"

"Derek was good enough to come up and now we have them on the Register."

Derek, a former South African now residing in Brisbane's suburb of Brookfield, first became interested in a register after he became aware of a similar organisation in the United States.

"*American Forests* has been going for about 80 years," Derek said.

"I've been interested in trees and birds all my life, so I came up with the idea of starting a register in Australia."

He credited the internet with his ability to put his ideas into action.

"I couldn't have started it without the internet," he said.

"There are people from all over the world who follow these registers.

"Some will travel, both within Australia and internationally and Australia receives overseas visitors interested in our trees."



Top: This Pacific Almond (*Terminata catappa*) is also Australia's national champion in its species.

Below: Cook Shire Council Parks and Gardens Manager Jim Doidge in the Cooktown Botanical Gardens, dwarfed by the Pacific Almond (*Terminata catappa*).



Derek said both the American and Australian versions were non-profit organisations, with him self-funding his project.

"I retired and have been involved with the Register ever since," he said.

"And I've been all over the country for these beautiful specimens."

He said he adopted the American points system, which measures the girth, height and crowns of living trees.

And here they are, with their measurements and points:

- Pacific Almond – *Terminata catappa*, with a circumference of 4.54 metres, height of 30 metres and a crown of 32 metres for a score of 303 points; and

- Gum – poplar – *Eucalyptus platyphlla*, with a circumference of 2.76 metres, height of 24 metres and crown of 22 metres for a score of 205 points.

Derek said he believed the Cook Shire could be home to many more species of national champions and he is hoping that locals will be vigilant in their travels.

To nominate a potential champion, go to: http://www.nationalregisterofbigtrees.com.au/listing_view.php?listing_id=1095

Quotes wanted for Lakeland and Laura art

COOK Cook Shire Council has secured a grant through the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) to paint murals on the Lakeland and Laura amenities blocks.

Council is calling for quotes for the project management, development of a design and facilitation of the two community art projects, which will take the form of murals on the outside walls of the buildings.

"I think it's a great opportunity for someone with project management skills and a passion for their community to be involved," Cook Shire Council Tourism and Community Services Team Leader Sally Eales said.

"The artwork will be developed in consultation with the community, so we hope they will take real ownership of this project and the result will be some beautiful public art."

Quotes must be submitted to Cook Shire Council by 4.45pm on Friday, June 3. For more information, or to submit a quote, contact Ms Eales via email on mail@cook.qld.gov.au or phone on 4069 5444.

Quotes may also be mailed to council at PO Box 3, Cooktown, Queensland, 4895 or dropped off at council's office at 10 Furneaux Street, Cooktown.

Bitumen coming for Cooktown streets

ROADWORKS on Cooktown's Parkinson and Ida streets are progressing on schedule, with bitumen expected to be laid next month.

The recently relaid shoulder of Hope Street is scheduled to be sealed at the same time. Meanwhile, work on Cook Shire Council's staff car park began late last month. The site, formerly the basketball courts of the Cooktown primary school, has been levelled and raised to reduce potholes and water pooling, and the basketball hoops removed.

Concrete kerb laid at the staff car park earlier this month was substandard, and will be replaced, council's Infrastructure Services Director Robert Uebergang said, but the work was not expected to affect the time frame of the project.

"We have scheduled the Hope Street shoulder works to coincide with the sealing of Parkinson and Ida streets to utilise the bitumen contractor while they are in town and save costs," Mr Uebergang said.

Council has also begun work this week on the section of footpath along Hope Street from the intersections with Ida and Charles streets. Council urges road users to be aware of crew on the road and changed traffic conditions, and abide by any traffic direction in the area.