

TROPICALIA: gardens with tropical attitude!

PART 1: What does it mean?



Jeannie Sim

What is 'Tropicalia'? And does it hurt?!



- The word '**tropicalian**' is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* 2nd edn (1989), as 'Belonging to the marine region called *Tropicalia*, comprising the seas between the isocrymes of 68° F. [= meteorological lines of similar mean daily maximum of 20° C. during the coldest months] on each side of the equator.'
- It seems quite reasonable to appropriate the word to apply to the garden character typical of a similar climatic region on land!

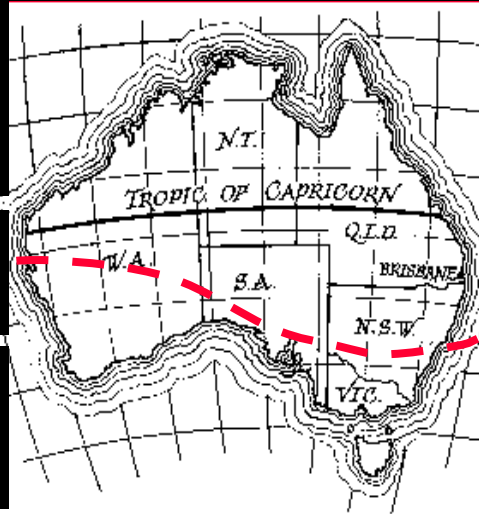
So where are the Tropics and Subtropics in Australia?



Tropics
min 4.4°C
(USDA Plant
Hardness
zone 11)

Subtropics
min 1.1°C
(zone 10)

All else is
Temperate
zone (frosts,
etc.)



Wet Tropics
or Dry Tropics

Inland frosts

Tropical
Montane
(up country)

Limit of
tropicalia:
20°C Isotherm
= mean temp.?

Who invented 'Tropicalia' for Gardens?



- What is tropicalia?
It's a garden that 'looks tropical'!
And it could be located in Hawaii, Brisbane, London or New York!
- Hawaiian landscape architect Richard C. Tongg explained in 1960, 'developing gardens on the theme of "tropicalia", [means] making gardens in the tropics look the part, instead of being pale copies of other styles.'
- What do Tropicalian gardens look like?

What is
'Tropicalia'?

→ wet, lush, fat
leaves?!

Warren & Tettoni
1991:142

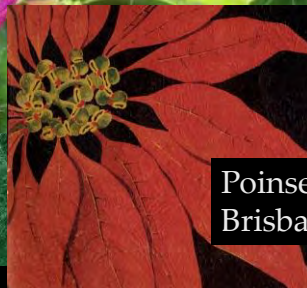


What is 'Tropicalia'? → or 'vulgar' colour?!



Graptophyllum ilicifolium
Mount Blackwood Holly

<http://www.mackayregionalbotanicgardens.com.au/>



Poinsettia from Mexico =
Brisbane's Floral emblem



Discussing Tropicalia...

this is the roadmap; but we might get lost anyway!

(1) EXPLAINING TROPICALIA...

(2) EXPLORING THE HISTORY of TROPICALIA...

- 19th C. tropical gardens - cooler climes
- 19th C. tropical gardens - warmer climes
- Early 20th century tropical gardens
- Postwar tropical gardens
- Modernism in Brazilian tropical gardens
- 21st C. tropical gardens - cooler climes
- Contemporary Southeast Asian tropicalia: 1990s on

Part 2 has these last topics!

TROPICAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER in Queensland, Australia



1 DENSE JUNGLE-LIKE PLANTING

("massed, crowded effects")

2 LARGE-LEAVED PLANTS

(macrophyll leaves typical in rainforests)

3 LIANES scrambling up tree trunks

("the enveloping growth of great-leaved creepers")

The three vital & important characteristics of "Tropicalia" according to Kuck & Tongg (1939).¹

'Exotic Aspect'

iconic tropical species: palms, figs etc. (A)
 combine disparate communities (pines & palms) (B)
 massed colour in flowers & foliage (C)
 bold colour combinations (eg. opposites) (E)
 tropical shade gardening (verandah, bush-house) (F)

The additional aspects observed in Queensland

'Bizarre Aspect'

rustic constructions using giant clam shells & coral-stone; whale-bones and *objets trouvés* (especially seaside flotsam/jetsam) as garden ornaments

The other occasional aspects observed in Queensland

Explaining TROPICALIA!

This is the key to my talk... I developed this for my PhD, so it must be scholarly!

Tropical Garden Character... 'Tropicalia'



1. a lush jungle-like density of planting ("massed, crowded effects");

The first of the three points that were taken from the ideas of
Loraine E. Kuck and Richard C. Tongg (1939),
The Tropical Garden, New York: Macmillan. pp. 2 and 5.

Tropical Garden Character... 'Tropicalia'



Fern Island OBBG c.1870s

Tropical Garden Character... 'Tropicalia'



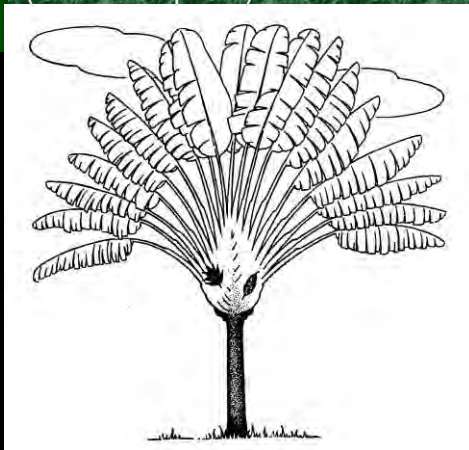
2. "the selection of large-leaved plants" (macrophyll-type leaves typical in rainforests);
3. "the enveloping growth of great-leaved creepers" scrambling up tree trunks;

TROPICALIA #2: MACROPHYLL leaves

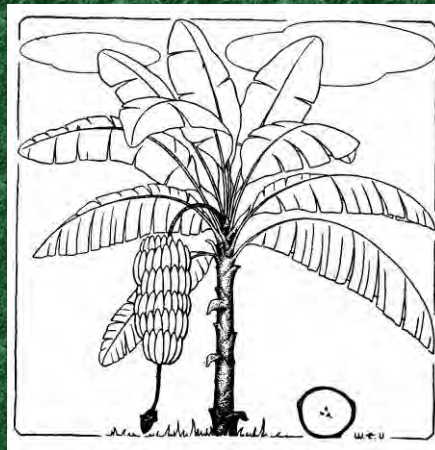
[McGeachy 1982: 56 & 58]



Ravenala madagascarensis
(travelers' palm)



Musa sp. (banana)



TROPICALIA #2 & #3:

Large-leaved vines scrambling up trees.
Old Brisbane Botanic Gardens 2002.



Up a fig!

Epipremnum aureum
(pothos vine)



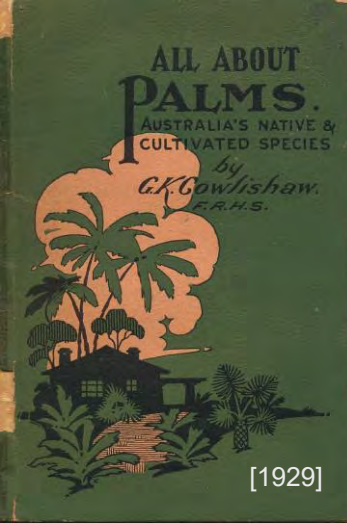
Up a hoop pine!

TROPICAL GARDEN CHARACTER: The 'Exotic Aspect'...



- A. certain **iconic tropical species** such as palms, bamboo, (tropical) fig trees, epiphytes (staghorn ferns, orchids, bird's nest ferns, etc.), and rainforest vines (lianes);
- B. combining traditionally **ecologically disparate species** (e.g. pines and palms);
- C. plant types that provide **masses of colourful** flowers and/or foliage;
- D. **bold colour combinations**;
- E. typical **tropical shade gardening practices** such as verandah, bush-house and fernery gardening...

'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES ...
PALMS – perhaps the most potent symbol of the tropics



OBBG 2003

'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES ...
BAMBOO – the useful ornamental



Murrumba (=good place)  Tom Petrie's house, c.1910s

'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES ...
BAMBOO – the useful ornamental



Photo courtesy: Murrumba
VIEW, BOTANICAL GARDENS, BRISBANE.
Old Brisbane Botanic Gardens... Bamboo Avenue

'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES ...
BAMBOO – the useful ornamental



OBBG Bamboo Avenue Planted October 1998; June 2003

'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES ...
big tropical figs... *Ficus benghalensis* (banyan)



Cleveland, Q (2003)

'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES ...
big tropical figs... *Ficus benghalensis* (banyan)



Old Brisbane Botanic Gardens (about a third of spread), 2003

'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES ...
EPIPHYTE FOREST at Expo '88, Brisbane (L.Smith) &
Elkhorn fern, Parliament House, Brisbane



'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES...

Kuck & Tongg 1960: ALPINIAS (Gingers) p.135;
HELICONIAS pp.130 &131; ANTHURIUM p.143.



TROPICALIAN understorey plants (most are shade loving...)

- A'pes (*Alocasia* spp.)
- Taros (*Calocasia* spp.)
- Caladiums and *Zantedeschia* spp. (Calla lilies)
- Anthuriums, Bananas etc. (*Musa*, *Heliconia*, *Ravenala*, *Strelitzia*)
- Cordylines and Dracaenas
- Gingers (*Alpinia*, *Hedychium*, *Zingiber*, *Curcuma*)
- Pandanus, 'Spider Lilies' (*Crinum*, *Hymenocallis*, *Pancratium*)
- Exotic Vines (*Monstera*, *Philodendron*, *Pothos*)
- Bamboos & other large grasses
- Bromeliads
- Others (*Aglaonema*, *Asparagus*, *Calathea*, *Chlorophytum*, *Coleus*, *Dieffenbachia*, *Iresine*, *Macaranga*, *Rhoeo*, *Vriesia* & *Tillandsia*, etc.)
- Begonias!
- Plus shade loving vines – peppers, hoyas, climbing maidenhair (a fern!)

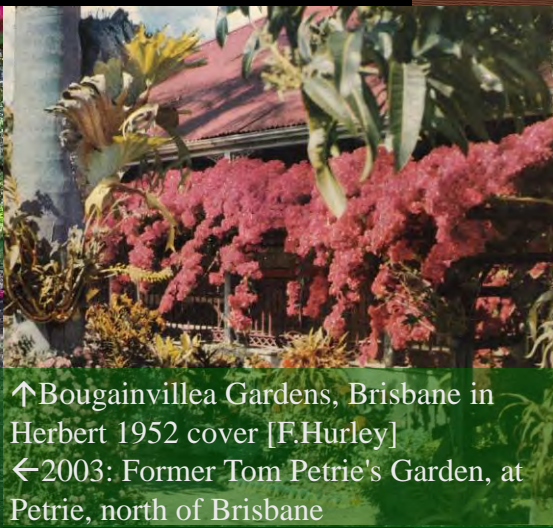
'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES... some flowers of tropicalia



← HIBISCUS (Kuck & Tongg 1960: 88)
Float bowl of
FRANGIPANI and hibiscus flowers
(Warren & Tettoni 1998:185) ↓



'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES... Bougainvillea



↑ Bougainvillea Gardens, Brisbane in
Herbert 1952 cover [F.Hurley]
← 2003: Former Tom Petrie's Garden, at
Petrie, north of Brisbane

'Exotic Aspect' A: ICONIC TROPICAL SPECIES... Bougainvillea



Coochin-Coochin Station
[Hurley 1950:50]

'Exotic Aspect' B: combining traditionally ecologically disparate species (e.g. bunyas & succulents)



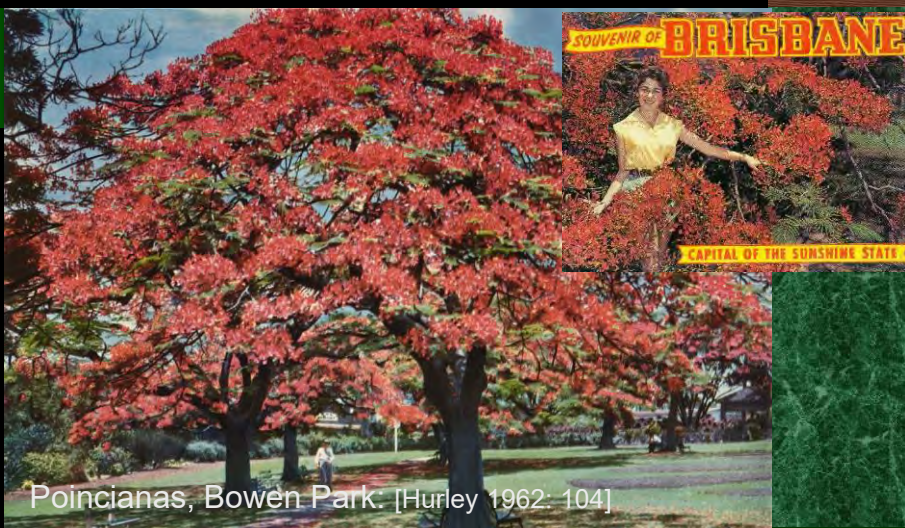
Botanical Gardens, (Pine Tree Walk and River), Brisbane.

'Exotic Aspect' B:
combining traditionally ecologically disparate species
(e.g. pines and palms)



Old Brisbane Botanic Gardens 2002

'Exotic Aspect' C: plant types that provide
masses of colourful flowers and/or foliage



Poincianas, Bowen Park. [Hurley 1962: 104]

'Exotic Aspect' C: plant types that provide masses of colourful flowers and/or foliage



Jacarandas in New Farm Park

MURRAY VIEWS NO. 50. JACARANDA AVENUE, NEW FARM PARK, BRISBANE

'Exotic Aspect' C: massed colour...
Albert Park, Brisbane, c. 1960s: massed *Acalyphas* (under the fig trees) & massed *Cannas* (middle beds), and...



ACALYPHA 'catch-me-if-you-can'
[Kuck & Tongg, 1960: 100]



Queensland
**GARDEN
ANNUAL**

FIFTH EDITION - 4/6

'Exotic Aspect' C: massed colour...
massed Acalyphas everywhere! Maybe too many?



'Exotic Aspect' C: massed colour...
Bowen Park, Brisbane: replanted with Cannas



'Exotic Aspect' C: massed colour...

Bowen Park, Brisbane: replanted with Cannas



'Exotic Aspect' D: bold colour combinations



Jade vine:
Strongylodon macrobotrys

bird of paradise: *Strelitzia reginae* [Kuck & Tongg 1960: 132]

'Exotic Aspect' E: tropical shade gardening...
verandah gardening



" 'Mother and Aunt Mary on the verandah'. 'Invicta', the Kingsford residence, Cairns District, ca. 1888". (JOL#67638)

'Exotic Aspect' E: tropical shade gardening...
verandah gardening



Burle Marx's verandah, Brazil
(Eliovson 1991: 35 & 37)

The long verandah of Burle Marx's house, featuring plants and pottery, is the gathering place for guests. Old ship prows, fashioned like horses' heads, ornament the walls.



'Exotic Aspect' E: tropical shade gardening...
bush-house and fernery gardening;



In cool-temperate climates, growing warm climate plants (called house plants or stove plants) means using GLASSHOUSES, which sometimes have to be heated as well = very expensive!

In warm climates the same conditions are provided by growing outside under trees or in special SHADE HOUSES → bush-houses!



1893 'Glazed Fernery' = re-roofed Conservatory (b.1877) thatched on eastern side with brush to create a shadehouse, Old Brisbane Botanic Gardens. Source: BCC PHF/D0096-Part-13 = JOL #170638].



Fern Island
(b.1860s)
views from 1870s,
designed by Walter
Hill, Old Brisbane
Botanic Gardens.



A
Happy
New
Year
1904

BOTANIC GARDENS
BRISBANE ISLAND

P. M. M.

1904: MacMahon's Shade-house. Exterior view of shade-house first created in 1890 in Old Brisbane Botanic Gardens. Source: Postcard, Author's collection.

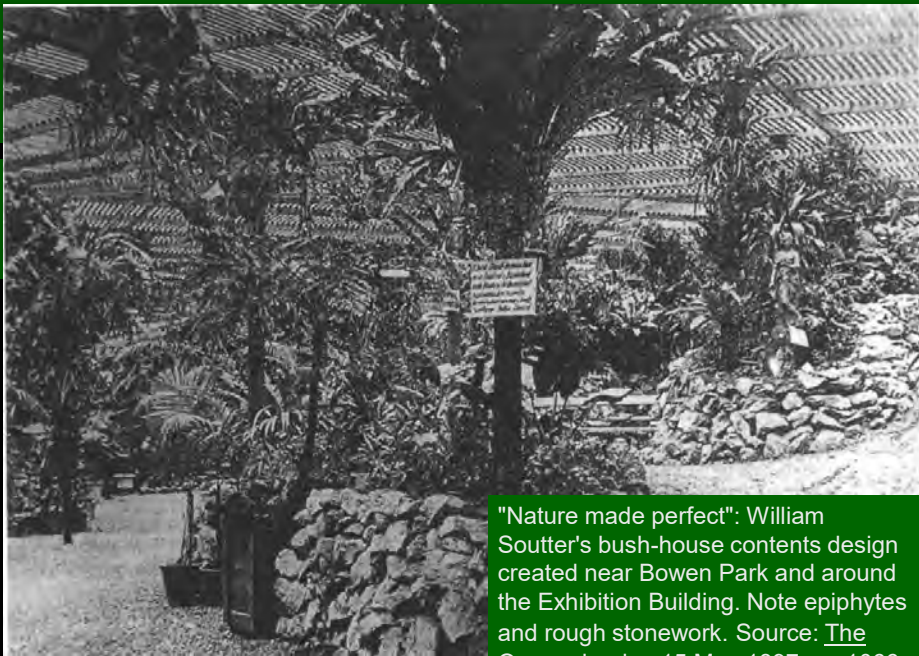


FERN HOUSE, BOTANIC GARDENS, BRISBANE.

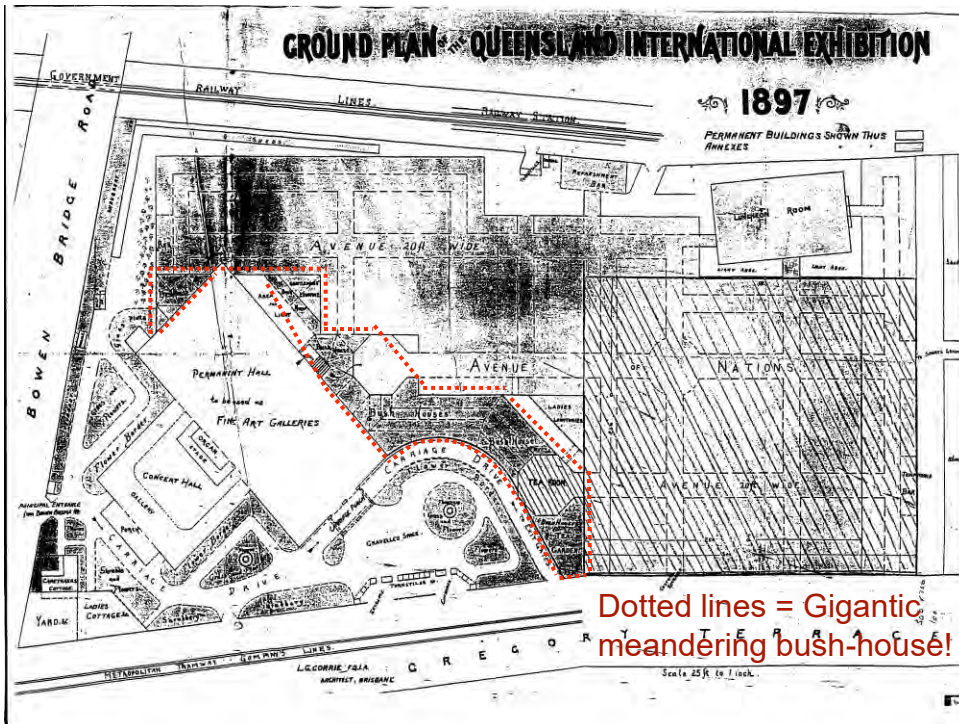
← Note use of twigs as roof cladding to create shade!

Called a "Fern House" = MacMahon's Shade-house, interior view of shade-house first created in 1890 in Old Brisbane Botanic Gardens.

Source: Print, Author's collection.



"Nature made perfect": William Soutter's bush-house contents design created near Bowen Park and around the Exhibition Building. Note epiphytes and rough stonework. Source: The Queenslander, 15 May 1897, pg.1066.





Soutter's bush-house
Source: The Queenslander, 15 May
1897, pg.1066 and JOL185175



Fernery at Rippon Lea:
1990s after conservation.

Fernery at Rippon Lea,
Melbourne (1880s)
Source: Watts 1983:49



"*Rhapis multifida*
within the

Hugo
Lassen
Fernery."
from the
PACSOA
website

<http://www.pacsoa.org.au/gardens/Rockhampton/index1.html>

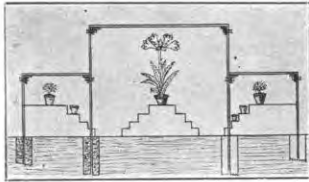
"... Hugo Lassen Fernery was built in 1938. Hugo Lassen was a local dentist who bequeathed money to the Rockhampton Botanic Gardens. The fernery, a sophisticated cross form bush house, contains extensive rockeries and houses an impressive exotic fern collection." Extract from citation to Qld Heritage Register (Accessed online 5/3/2003)



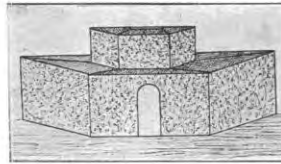
Macmillan 1935:64

VIEW IN FLORICULTURAL SECTION, ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, CEYLON.

OCTAGON CONSERVATORY IN ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, PERADENIYA, CEYLON.



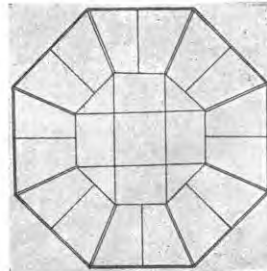
UPRIGHT SECTION.



ELEVATION.



GROUND PLAN.



PLAN OF TOP SECTION.



Conservatory
= fernery
= bush-house

at Peradeniya
(in Sri Lanka,
former
Ceylon)

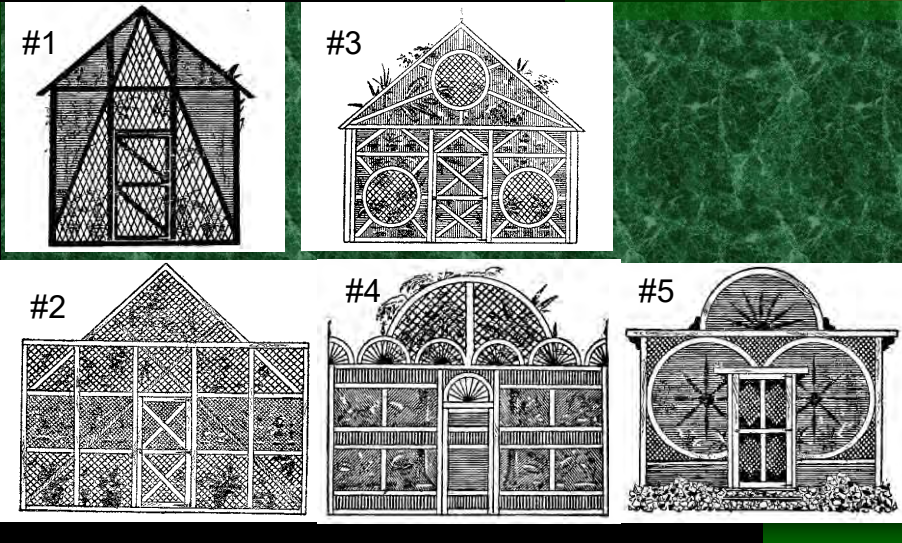
Source:
Macmillan
1935:74



Macmillan 1935:64

VIEW IN OCTAGON CONSERVATORY, ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, CEYLON.

A.E. Cole (1922)
Half Hours in the Bush-house



W.A. Shum (1940)
Australian Gardening of Today Illustrated

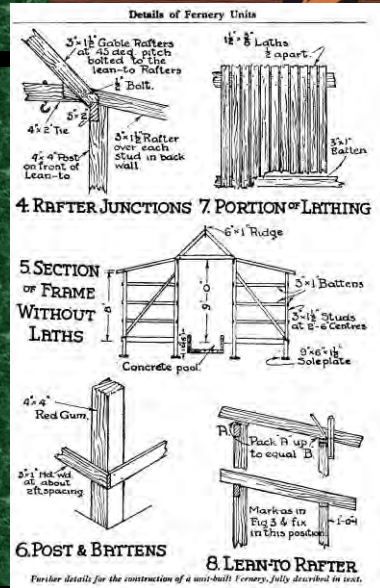
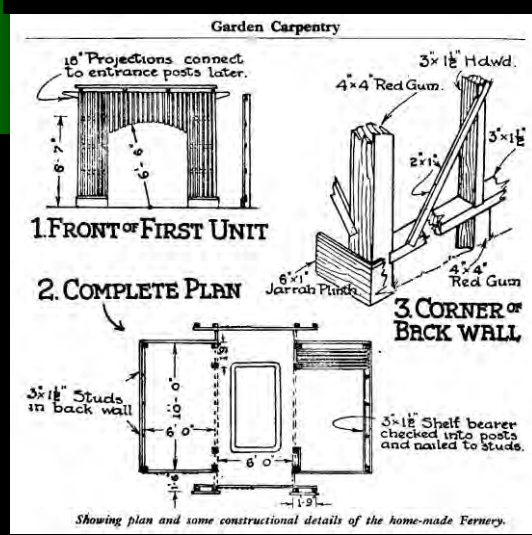


c. 1939:
 Alex Smith's clever design and instructions to build this fernery or bush-house, allows for easy extensions if needed.


Source: Smith in Shum (1940:323)

Proper plaster type Laths (1½"x 3/8") not drawn to correct scale!

Smith in Shum (c.1940) Construction Details.
pg. 320-321



1990s: Bush-house at Nindoinbah, near Beaudesert Qld.



My Father's
Orchid House at
Proserpine, Qld.
exterior view
after Cyclone
Ada 1971.

Proving that
4by2's can do
almost
anything...
including holding
up buildings!

Modern shade-houses



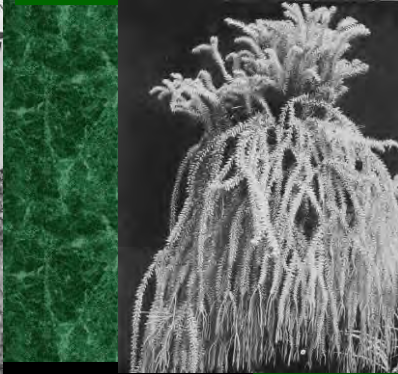
- Qld botanist D.A. Herbert (1952) called them 'bush-houses'...
- Kuck and Tongg of Hawaii (1936 & 1960) describe 'lath-houses'...
and ...
- Burle Marx experimented with numerous ways to grow plants, including shade loving plants under special shade structures and more...



"Staghorn Fern (*Platycerium grande*)." opposite pp.169

"Tassel Fern (*Lycopodium phlegmaria*) growing in a basket."

Source: D.A.Herbert
Gardening in Warm Climates
(J.R. Bailey photos) 1952



"An architect-designed lath house can become an extremely attractive adjunct to the house or lanai, where its plants offer constant interest and beauty and their care can be an absorbing hobby."

Source: Kuck & Tongg The Modern Tropical Garden
1960:176

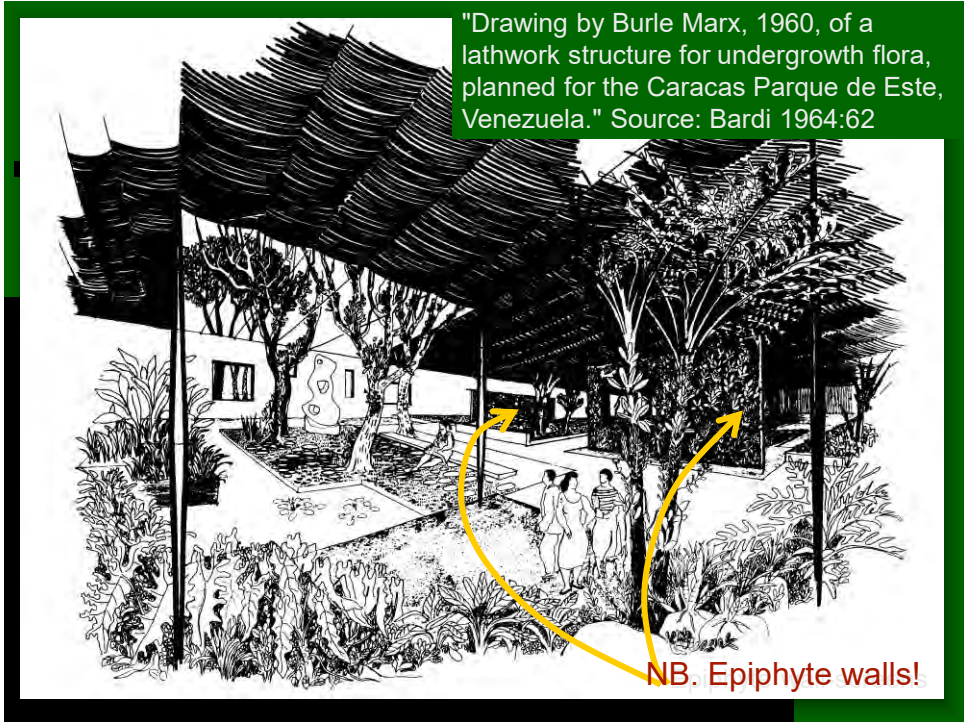


"Roberto Burle Marx in his greenhouse at the *sítio* (Archives of the Sítio Burle Marx)."
Source: Vaccarino 2000:57.



Plant House or Nursery, Roberto Burle Marx's own propagating house at his farm (*Sítio*) called Santo Antonio da Bica, in Guaratiba, Brazil.
Source: Bardi 1964: 25 (text, pg.81)





"Drawing by Burle Marx, 1960, of a lathwork structure for undergrowth flora, planned for the Caracas Parque de Este, Venezuela." Source: Bardi 1964:62

NB. Epiphyte walls!



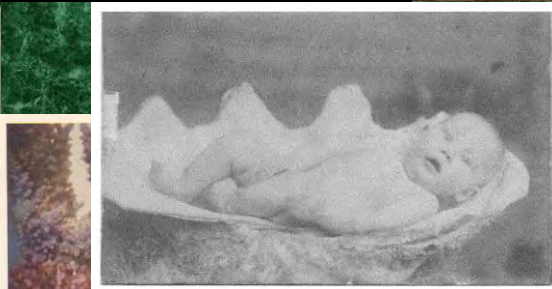
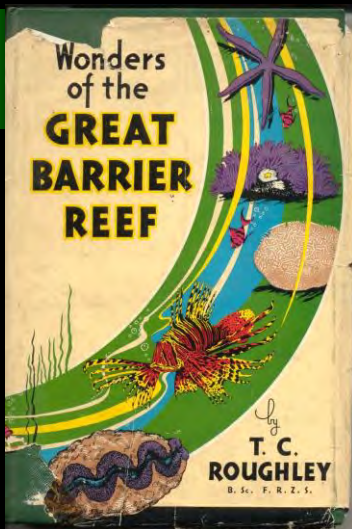
The new FERN HOUSE at Brisbane Botanic Gardens, Mt. Coot-tha (September 2002).

+ maybe, a 'Bizarre Aspect'?



- possible components of the 'bizarre aspect' found as garden ornaments in Queensland, include:
 - rustic constructions using giant clam shells and/or coral-stone
 - whale-bones as archways
 - *objets trouvés* (especially seaside flotsam/jetsam) e.g. 'Japanese glass & macramé rope buoys'.

'Bizarre' Tropical natural resources: useful Coral & Giant Clam Shells



BRANCHING CORAL-LIKE TREES IN BLOSSOM, GROWING ABOVE THE SOLID SOLID PORETES. In the foreground an open clam displays its beautiful blue mantle edge.

PLATE 7

'Bizarre' Tropical natural resources:

Pair of Giant Clam Shells decorating front steps of Fernberg (now Govt House, Bardon, Brisbane).



'Bizarre' CLAM SHELL FOUNTAINS:
Queensland Court in London, conservatory at the
Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886



Source: McKay (1998) "A Good Show": Colonial Queensland at International Exhibitions" Fig.40, pg. 222

'Bizarre' CLAM SHELL FOUNTAINS:
Queensland Court in London, conservatory at the
Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886



*Illustrated
London News,*
28 Aug 1886,
Fig.48, pg. 227

'Bizarre' rustic fountain and whalebone arch at
Bowen Park, Brisbane [plus classical statuary!]



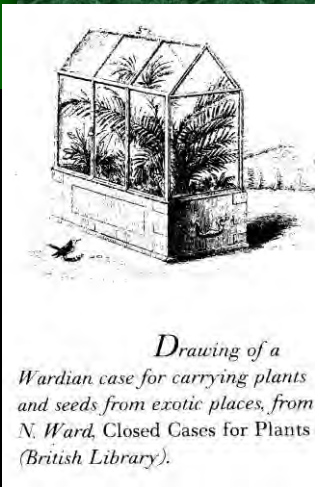
Part (2)

Exploring the history of tropicalia...



- In cooler climates (back in 19th century)
- In warm/hot climates (20th century)
- And contemporary explorations in both cooler climates and really tropical places...

19th century tropical gardening in cooler climates: Wardian cases & heated glasshouses



Drawing of a Wardian case for carrying plants and seeds from exotic places, from N. Ward, Closed Cases for Plants (British Library).

Warren 1991:9



Paxton's Conservatory at Chatsworth built 1836-40 (Warren 1991: 11)

19th century tropical gardening
in cooler climes:
Wardian cases & heated glasshouses



Decimus Burton & Paxton's Palm House, RBG, Kew built 1844-48 (*Illustrated London News*, 7 August 1852, in Warren 1991: 10)

19th century tropical gardening in cooler climes:
(Sub)tropical bedding in Europe



ADMIRING A NEWLY ARRIVED EXOTIC



Tropical bedding at Battersea Park, Britain from 1864, by John Gibson (Hobhouse 2002:273)

→ excitement over pampas grass!

The Gulf Stream warms Britain...
Isles of Scilly, Cornwall & Southwest Scotland!

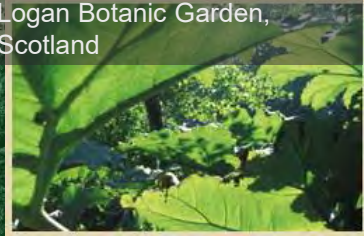


Tresco Abbey Garden, Scilly

For half-hardy subtropical gardens...
Cordyline australis
Dicksonia antarctica
Gunnera manicata



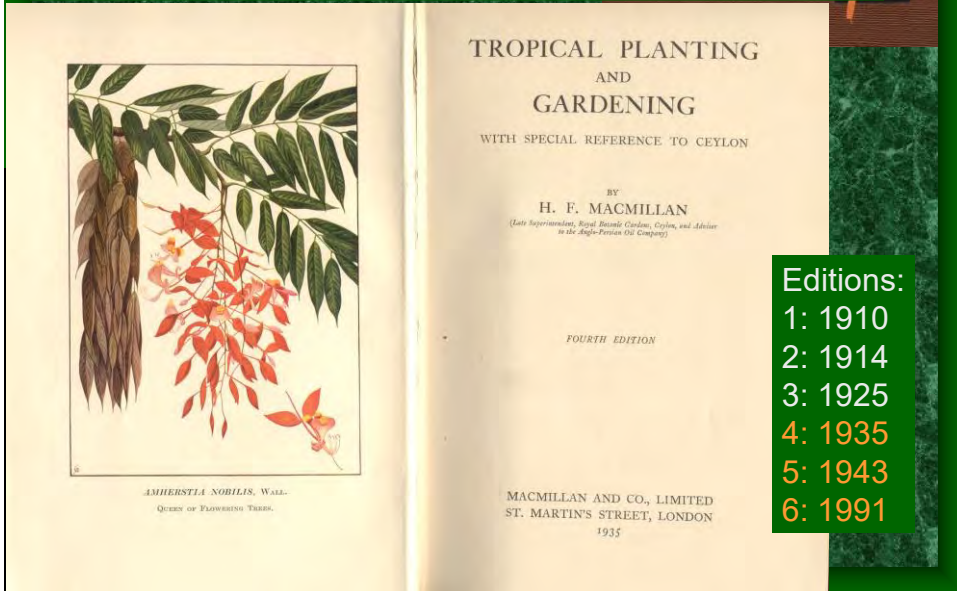
Logan Botanic Garden, Scotland



Meanwhile, in the real tropics...
in the 20th century



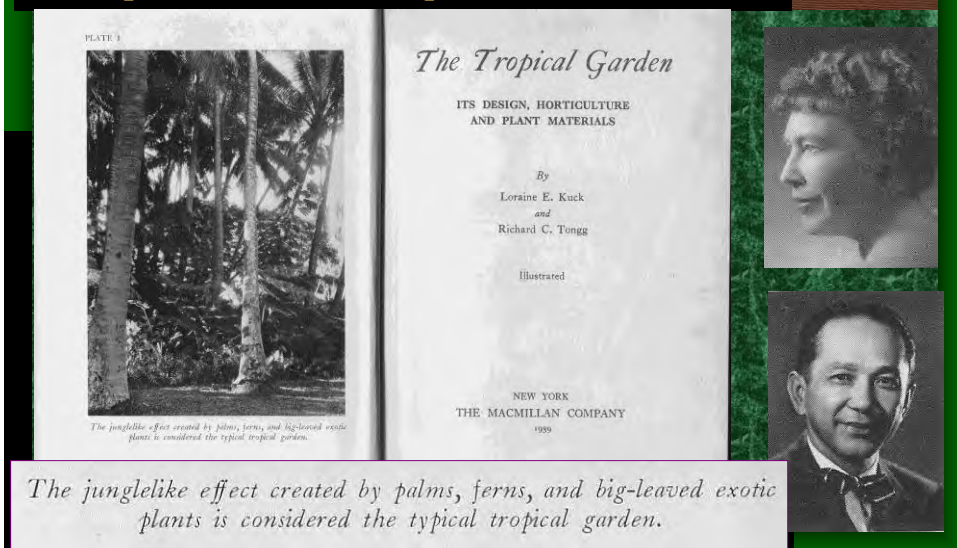
Macmillan (1935) *Tropical Planting and Gardening*



Editions:

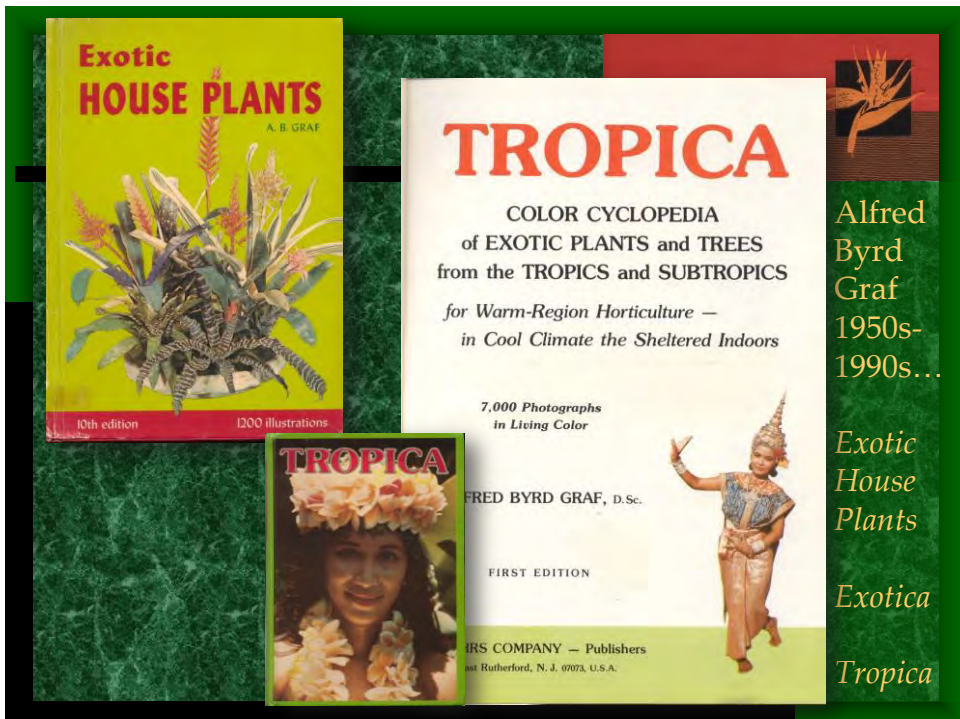
- 1: 1910
- 2: 1914
- 3: 1925
- 4: 1935
- 5: 1943
- 6: 1991

Loraine E. Kuck & Richard C. Tongg: *The Tropical Garden* First published 1936, reprinted 1939



The junglelike effect created by palms, ferns, and big-leaved exotic plants is considered the typical tropical garden.

Kuck & Tongg: *The Modern Tropical Garden*, first published 1955, reprinted 1960 & 1970.
 Plus *Hawaiian Flowers*, first in 1943, revised 1960





A Suburban Garden, near Brisbane. (Photo: Frank Heath)



GARDENING IN WARM CLIMATES

BY
D. A. HERBERT, D.Sc.
Professor of Botany, University of Queensland

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
J. R. BAILEY
Career, Botanic Gardens, Brisbane



ANGUS AND ROBERTSON
SYDNEY · LONDON

Queensland:

D.A.
Herbert:
*Gardening
in Warm
Climates*
(1952)



GARDENING IN QUEENSLAND



H. OAKMAN

TROPICAL AND SUBTROPICAL GARDENING

Harry Oakman

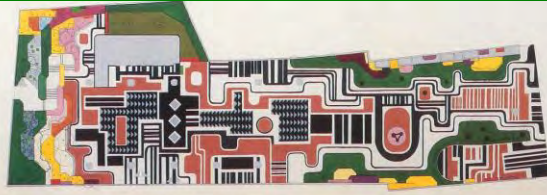


Harry
Oakman:
*Gardening
in
Queensland*
(1958)
and
*Tropical and
Subtropical
Gardening*
(1975, 1990
reprint)

Introducing Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994)



- The Brazilian landscape architect who influenced generations of Modernist architects and landscape designers in the northern and southern hemispheres...
- Began designing gardens in 1940s... until 1990s



Adams 1991: 64
Safta Bank plan



Larragoiti Hospital, Rio de Janeiro, 1957 (Bardi 1964:87)

P.M.
Bardi,
*The
Tropical
Gardens
of Burle
Marx*
1964

BARDI

LONDON



THE GARDENS OF
ROBERTO BURLE MARX



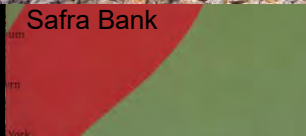
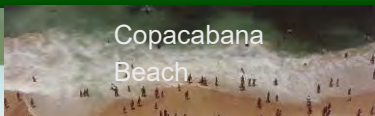
Sima Eliovson, *The
Gardens of Roberto
Burle Marx* 1991



Marx's 'plant house' p 56



Roberto Burle Marx c.1973



Safra Bank



William
Howard
ADAMS
(1991)
catalogue
for
exhibition
at MOMA,
NY

ROBERTO BURLE MARX
The Unnatural Art of the Garden



Vase with Maranta & Philodendron, c.1940s



Rossana Vaccarino, ed.,
Roberto Burle Marx:
Landscape Reflected
2000



Burle Marx c.1992

Marta Iris Montero,
Burle Marx: The Lyrical Landscape, 2001



Original plan
for Odette
Monteiro
Residence,
Rio de
Janeiro, 1948
& 1988

A final thought... Which is more evocative of Tropicalia?



Macmillan

VIEW IN FERNERY, PERADENIYA GARDENS,
CEYLON.

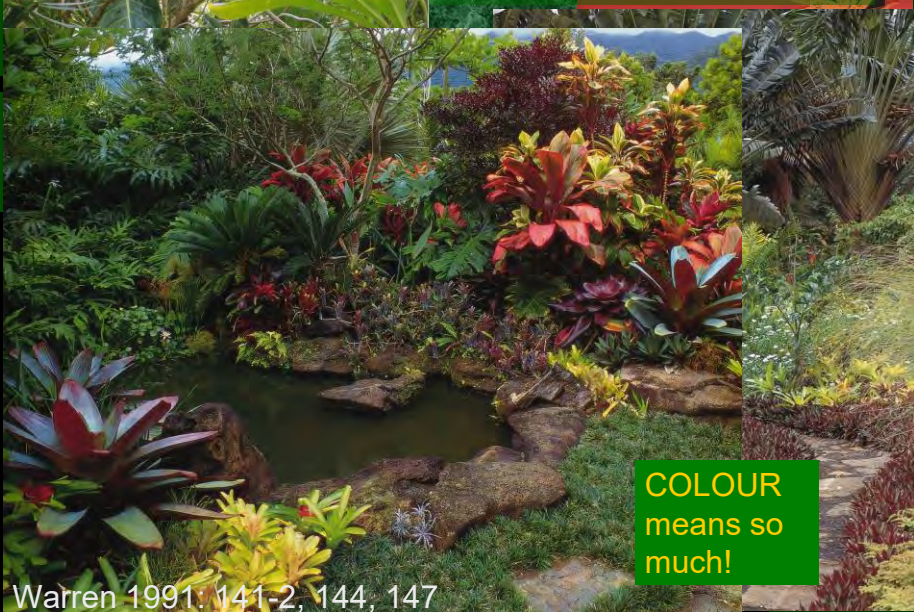


Kuck & Tongg 1930s

The junglelike effect created by palms, ferns, and big-leaved exotic plants is considered the typical tropical garden.

or...

Leland Miyano Garden, Hawaii (devotee of Burle Marx)



COLOUR
means so
much!

Warren 1991: 141-2, 144, 147

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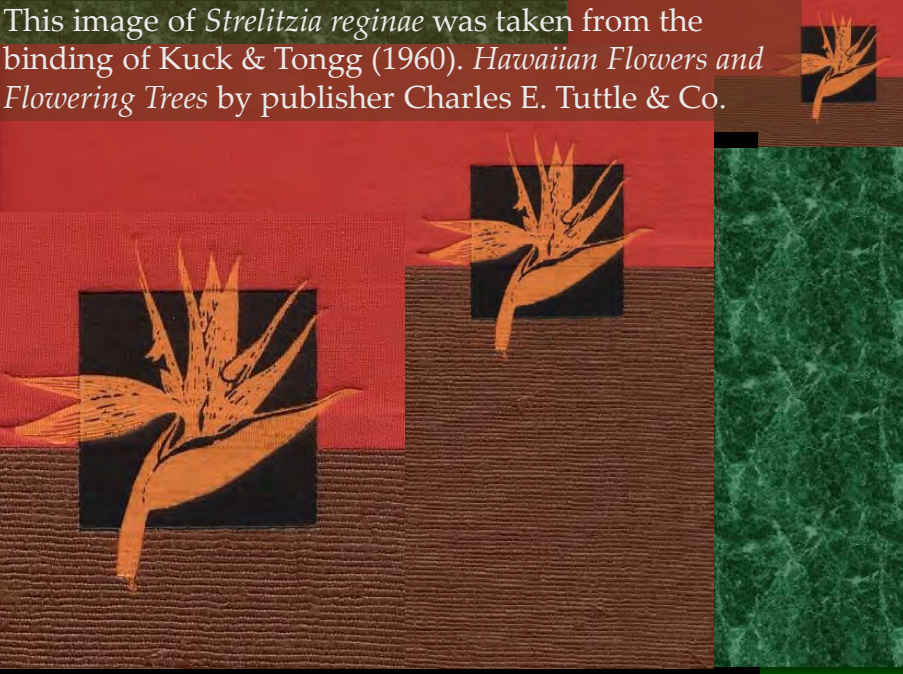
EDNA WALLING
Timeless pleasures

PETER VALDER
Chinese gardening heritage

We have arrived!
 Queensland tropicalian garden on national publication!
 Hundsheidt Tropical Garden, Sunnybank, Brisbane.



This image of *Strelitzia reginae* was taken from the binding of Kuck & Tongg (1960). *Hawaiian Flowers and Flowering Trees* by publisher Charles E. Tuttle & Co.



Where to go for more...



Aitken, R. and Looker, M. 2002. *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
[Jeannie Sim contributed 54 entries to this work!]

Sim, Jeannie, 2003. "TROPICALIA: Gardens with Tropical Attitude", in *Queensland Review*, Special Issue: TROPICAL PLEASURES: A Focus on Queensland Gardens. Papers of the 24th National Conference of the Australian Garden History Society, Brisbane, 11-13 July 2003. Vol.10, No.2, November 2003, pp. 1-24.

Sim, Jeannie, 2001. "A Golden Age of Gardening in the Subtropics", In Whitehead, Georgina (ed), *Planting the Nation*. Melbourne: Australian Garden History Society, pp. 115-135.