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16 **Advertiser** News

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Kimberley flora guru Tom Harley points out a native species. Picture: Kandy Curran

Gardening at centre of tour day at botanical park

Kandy Curran

The new Magabala Botanical Park drew an enthusiastic crowd during National Science Week.

Broome character Tom Harley has an encyclopaedic knowledge of Kimberley flora, and walked and talked the group through the park which is filled with flowers and bush tucker. With native plants and native

gardening books being given away, there were plenty of smiles from participants. The purpose of the National

Science Week event, run by Roebuck Bay Working Group, LandCorp and Society for Kimberley Indigenous Plants and Animals, was to promote gardening with native plants and water harvesting.

"With Broome on a peninsula surrounded by extraordinarily productive waters, it is essential that the community uses a coastal gardening approach that reduces polluted runoff that can impact marine life and feed blooms of toxic Lyngbya," Mr Harley said.

"It is also important to help restrict erosion and replenish the aquifer by building up swales."

Postdoctorate researcher Sora Estrella has collected scientific data over the past three years which indicates nutrient levels in Roebuck Bay exceed water quality guidelines.

A solution to the problem may be for the community to plant natives and trap rainwater.

Native plants do not require fertiliser and most can survive on less water than introduced plants, so are ideal for a coastal town such as

"The problem with fertilisers is the nutrients that are not used by the plants, can wash off gardens during heavy rain into stormwater drains that discharge into coastal waters," he said.

With blooms of Lyngbya occurring in Roebuck Bay in recent years, and pindan-coloured plumes flowing into the bay in recent unseasonal rainfall during the dry season, the science event served as a reminder for the community to embrace a gardening approach to help reduce runoff.

Magabala Botanical Park, established last year by LandCorp, served as a good venue for the event, with the park showcasing five Kimberley habi-Working with the local landcare

group SKIPA, landscape architects created botanical treasure for Broome, where hundreds of different plant species are thriving. A highlight of the Science Week

event was a welcome to country from Yawuru language teacher Maxine Charlie who showed onlookers her new book, Guwayi The Bar-tailed Godwit.

The crowd enjoyed meeting the author and seeing illustrations which show the godwit's annual migration from Roebuck Bay to the remote Russian tundra where they breed.

With Guwayi's epic journeys dependent on the abundant invertebrate life in Roebuck Bay's mudflats, it makes sense for the Broome community to use a coastal gardening approach to keep coastal waters clean and biologically productive.

Kandy Curran is project manager for Roebuck Bay Working Group.

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