

## Hidden oasis in the heart of Dee Why

Hidden in plain sight, this volunteer-run botanic garden is as much community as it is a nature retreat in the heart of Dee Why.

Opened in 1961, the **Stony Range Regional Botanic Garden**, was once considered an 'eyesore' from years of overgrowth and dumped rubbish. But thanks to a passionate councillor, it would soon be marked as a key area for the preservation of native flora and fauna. Early volunteers took the 'eyesore' and transformed the area with paved pathways and planting.

Now over 62 years on, the garden continues to be a calm oasis of bushland in the rapidly developing Dee Why heartland.

To explore the area, you can wander the numerous easy to moderate bush trails, including the 'main track' which takes you through the full gardens past rainforests, primitive areas of ancient plants and forest cascades. The track starts at an open area, which often hosts private functions like weddings, with a beautiful palm and water lily adorned pond in the centre.

The track also has numerous optional side tracks for you to explore like the rainforest loop track, which showcases cabbage tree palms, Bungalow palms and the North Queensland Licuala. Or undertake a bush tucker walk towards Paperbark Corner and find out new and old uses for native plants.

For a shorter loop, the 'sensory walk' gives you a minute to stop and 'smell a crushed leaf' before winding back to the picnic and bbq



Stony Range, a calming Dee Why Oasis since 1961

area past an active bush turkey nest.

It's messages like 'smell a crushed leaf,' dotted around the garden, that showcase the sense of community spirit in the garden. Around every corner is a little gem such as Joan's seat, a seat carved into the side of the path, or tiny notes hidden in the trees inviting kids to spot specific butterflies. All just tiny but important reminders to stop, slow down and take an extra minute to soak up nature.

### Did you know...

The hidden gems in this garden could be easily missed, so keep an eye out. From coloured and painted stones dotted along the footpath, to toy koalas hidden in the bushes to children's hand-made "Banksia men" from school holiday camps. Make sure to stop and get a photo at the 'Greetings from Stony Range' photo frame or take a "moment of silent reflection" on the bench in the middle of

the main track. There's even a volunteer plant nursery so you can infuse a bit of the botanic gardens into your own backyard open on Tuesday mornings from 9am - 12pm or Saturday from 2-4pm.

### How to get there

This easy to get to reserve is located at the edge of Dee Why before Curl Curl, directly off Pittwater Road. Look for the Stony Range main sign on the eastern side of the road heading south before you hit the intersection of Pittwater Road and Harbord Road. There is a small, free parking lot outside of the main gates. The garden is open from 8:30am - 8:30pm, except during daylight saving hours when the garden closes at 5:30pm.

Have a great spot you think should be featured?  
Email us at [mail@thetawnyfrogmouth.com.au](mailto:mail@thetawnyfrogmouth.com.au)

Words: **Rebecca Burton**