

Spotto Easter Cassia

A story from Fraser Island Bush Regeneration in April 2013 for John Sinclair's grandchildren

Wendy was very excited when Grandma invited her to go to Fraser Island with her during her Christmas school holidays. Wendy loved Fraser Island with its beaches, surf, lakes, coloured sand cliffs and the grand and diverse forest. She was also pleased to be going with Grandma who was always full of fun and doing interesting things. Even when she was doing boring things she always made them seem like fun. Grandma was never one to sit around and knit or watch TV. She always had projects to keep her busy.

It didn't take Wendy long to learn that Grandma's project while on this Fraser Island holiday was removing weeds in the village. Grandma soon had Wendy working with her. They were on their hands and knees crawling through parts of the forest where some vine with pretty orange flowers had gone wild.

"These are Coral creepers," Grandma announced as she introduced Wendy to the vine. *"These plants were planted in a garden but the wind blew the seed outside the garden and look at it now. It is a weed that is hard to get rid of, but we have to get rid of it before it gets out into the forest and is totally out of control."*

Grandma showed Wendy many weeds that were brought to Fraser Island as garden plants that then had spread far and wide outside the garden where they were first established.

"That is how some of our worst weeds like Lantana and Easter Cassia got started," Grandma explained.

Wendy knew what Lantana was but she didn't know what Easter Cassia was so she asked Grandma what it was.

"It is hard to see just now but when it is in flower you just can't miss it. It is a big shrub sometimes even tree size and has the brightest buttercup yellow flowers," she said as she reached out for a plant nearby and pulled off some leaves.

"This is the leaf of an Easter Cassia" Grandma explained. *"See it has pinnate leaves. That means that the leaf is made up of several leaflets. This Easter Cassia has five pairs of leaflets, but there can be anywhere between three and six pairs. See how they grow out opposite!"* said Grandma.

Wendy was really fascinated and she was getting a botany lesson while working on weeds. As they moved on Wendy got very excited every time she recognized an Easter Cassia plant. She would excitedly call out, *"Spotto Easter Cassia!"*

Grandma was most impressed by Wendy's enthusiasm and decided to encourage her. *"Wendy, see how those*

leaflets of the Easter Cassia are the size of a five cent piece. I will give you five cents for every Easter Cassia you can pull out."

That really made Wendy very sharp. She found that while she could pull the smaller Easter Cassias out of the loose sand by the roots on her own, not even with Grandma's help could she pull out many of the larger plants. Still by the end of the first day she had earned over three dollars as she ran from smaller plant to smaller plant calling out, *"Spotto Eatser Cassia!"*

When she got home Wendy told her parents how she had fun with Grandma and earned money while on a holiday to buy her a birthday present. Her mother told her that she would see many more Easter Cassia if she went back when they were in flower at Easter.

Wendy thought she would trick Grandma. She asked Grandma if she could go to Fraser Island with her on her next school holidays. Grandma said, *"Yes,"* not realizing that the next school holidays would be at Easter when the Easter Cassia would be in flower and more easily spotted.

On their Easter holiday Wendy earned lots of five cents per plant. She saved enough money to buy her grandmother a beautiful birthday present that was a book on weeds. Grandma laughed at how she had been tricked but she loved her birthday present paid for by the money she gave to Wendy for helping to get rid of all of the Easter Cassia around the village.

In a way Grandma also tricked Wendy because when they went back during the next Christmas holidays there was hardly an Easter Cassia to be found and the village was almost completely rid of these weeds. However Wendy had become an expert on the weeds Grandma was always plucking from the sand. She changed her calls to, *"Spotto Asparagus Fern!"* *"Spotto Painted Spurge"* and *"Spotto Brazilian Nightshade"* and *Spotto* lots of other weeds".

