Welcome to the first edition of Aquilaria Update Australia.

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a link for all those with a passion or interested in the tropical tree of the *Aquilaria* genus and its valuable wood product Agarwood.

The editor will release a newsletter twice a year, being Spring and Autumn editions, however we might find there is a great demand for more information and additional editions may eventuate.

Wescorp Agarwood’s manager Grant Pronk will be responsible for the coordination of the newsletter and welcomes readers to provide feedback as to what will make this newsletter work and be of real value.

Our mailing list comprises of individuals that are dealing with *Aquilaria* in one way or another. This includes, growers, foresters, nurserymen, plantation service providers, botanists, research scientists, traders, end consumers and no doubt there will be more.

I look forward to the learning experience and pioneering this exciting new industry for Australia with you.

**Editor - Grant Pronk**

**Wescorp Agarwood.**

**Seeds Germinating**

Wescorp Agarwood imported 10 kg of *Aquilaria crassna* seed from Vietnam in July.

The seeds were delivered to the Mad About Plants nursery and with the combined skills of Darryl and Sophie the germination is looking very good.

Seedlings are expected to be ready for planting in time for the next wet season. Purchase enquiries can be made to Grant Pronk.

Strong germination after 4 weeks from picking seed from trees in Vietnam.

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**What Did Tropical Cyclone Yasi Deliver?**

The devastation associated with Tropical Cyclone Yasi will remain with many Queenslanders for years to come. The plus 300 km per hour winds together with abrasive rain will damage most things, including trees.

The degree of damage to *Aquilaria* plantations across NFQ varied according to the strength of the winds encountered.

Two plantations in Silkwood were severely damaged by 300 km per hour winds and rain. One small trial plantation was completely destroyed and the other suffered a 70% tree loss. The damage was a combination of either trees snapping at the roots or massive outer stem damage caused by abrasive wind whipped rain.

Plantation damage decreased significantly the further away from the eye of the cyclone. The Boulders plantation near Babinda suffered only very minor wind damage, less than 5% loss.
named Aquilaria moth (Heortia vitessoides). It is not so much the moth but its larvae (caterpillars) that are very damaging to Aquilaria. This species of moth is found throughout parts of Asia where it is also a significant pest but is controlled.

The caterpillars cluster in the leaves of the trees and will quickly eat leaves and young bark. The cluster can completely defoliate and kill seedlings and young trees.

As with all plants, Aquilaria has its fair share of insects that feed upon it. In the last three years there has been several insects invasions in Aquilaria plantations in Queensland.

The first of the significant invasions was by the Spur Throated locust in Mossman in 2009. The swarm of locusts gradually moved from soybean fallow crops into the Aquilaria and proceeded to eat the trees bark and foliage. The swarm was controlled through the use of Chlorpyrifos, however sections of the plantation were destroyed and an infill programme was required.

Dr Tony Page from JCU has advised that monitoring and treating of locusts in fallow crops should prevent this type of incident happening in the future.

A more recent intruder into the plantations in the Babinda area is the aptly named Aquilaria moth (Heortia vitessoides). It is not so much the moth but its larvae (caterpillars) that are very damaging to Aquilaria.

This species of moth is found throughout parts of Asia where it is also a significant pest but is controlled.

The caterpillars cluster in the leaves of the trees and will quickly eat leaves and young bark. The cluster can completely defoliate and kill seedlings and young trees.

Hundreds of trees can be destroyed if the caterpillars go unchecked.

Effective treatment to date has been with the application of the biological pesticide Gemstar. This pesticide is not harmful to most other insects in the plantations.

The caterpillars appear to be most active in Spring and Autumn, however populations have been found during Winter.

Keep a look out for them!