

***Parsonsia straminea* (Monkey Rope)**

This climbing vine is quite obvious along the boardwalk at the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary. Its normal habitats include rainforest and sclerophyll forests, but it is most prominent in the melaleuca forest here, thriving in sun, part sun or full shade. In rainforest, it may also scramble over rocks. It is a robust plant with two methods of climbing into the canopy. It twists around the trunk of its host and grows upwards, and in so doing, it also puts out adventitious roots from along the stem, penetrating and clinging onto the bark. Eventually, it becomes quite a woody plant and the main trunk may have a diameter up to 9 centimetres.

Leaves tend to be bright green and vary in size up to 24 cm long and up to 8 cm wide. The sap is thin and milky. Flowers are comparatively tiny and appear in spring, summer and autumn. They are white, cream or pale yellow, with a tube only 3 mm long supporting 5 petals only 4 mm long and curving back. The flowers grow in clusters, are hairy at the base of the petal but can also carry hairs along the petal. The fruit is a slim green capsule 10 – 20 cm in length. At maturity, the capsule turns brown and splits open, releasing the seeds for wind dispersal. The fine seeds are up to 15 mm long, and have plumes of long white silky hairs which float easily on breezes.

Monkey Rope is valuable to the fauna of the sanctuary. Butterflies such as Lesser Wanderer and Common Crow lay on the leaves which provide food for the larvae. Nectar is used by Blue Tiger, Swamp Tiger, Varied Eggfly, Blue Triangle, and Varied Dusky Blue butterflies, as well as native bees and wasps. Possums love to eat the flowers and young leaves, and Ring-tailed Possums build and use dreys in its thick growth in the canopy.



Parsonsia straminea vine Photo: Robyn Howard



Buds and Flowers

Photo: Derek Boddington B.R.A.I.N. website



Seed dispersal

Photo: Robyn Howard