**January 2021 Plant Cuttings**

**The mystery of the blue flower: nature’s rare colour owes its existence to bee vision – The Conversation, 25 January 2021**

At a dinner party, or in the schoolyard, the question of favourite colour frequently results in an answer of “blue”. Why is it that humans are so fond of blue? And why does it seem to be so rare in the world of plants and animals? We [studied these questions](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpls.2020.618203/full) and concluded blue pigment is rare at least in part because it’s often difficult for plants to produce. <https://theconversation.com/the-mystery-of-the-blue-flower-natures-rare-colour-owes-its-existence-to-bee-vision-153646>

# Rare plant from the Manning increases in population following bushfires – Great Lakes Advocate, 25 December 2020

A rare plant found only in the Manning Valley has awed researchers, after its population increased from just 600 to more than 20,000 plants following the 2019-20 bushfires. <https://www.greatlakesadvocate.com.au/story/7067637/rare-plant-from-the-manning-increases-in-population-following-bushfires/>

**‘Like finding life on Mars’: why the underground orchid is Australia’s strangest, most mysterious flower – The Conversation, 29 December 2020**

If you ask someone to imagine an orchid, chances are pots of moth orchids lined up for sale in a hardware store will spring to mind, with their thick shiny leaves and vibrant petals. What about a small, pale tuber that spends its whole life underground, blooms underground and smells like vanilla? This is the underground orchid, *Rhizanthella*, and it’s perhaps the strangest Australian orchid of them <https://theconversation.com/like-finding-life-on-mars-why-the-underground-orchid-is-australias-strangest-most-mysterious-flower-144727>

# Striking Christmas bell wildflowers bloom in abundance after bushfires, then rain at Port Macquarie – ABC, 31 December 2020Striking red and yellow Christmas bell flowers are blooming in abundance in northern New South Wales, creating an eye-catching display among coastal heathland. The native wildflowers have emerged in huge numbers this summer in the wake of high rainfall and previous bushfires. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-31/striking-christmas-bells-bloom-in-abundance-bringing-joy/13022108>

# Panama disease threatens Coffs Harbour banana plantations, supply of Lady Finger and Ducasse varieties at risk – ABC, 12 January 2021

A highly destructive fungal disease known for wiping out entire banana crops, is devastating plantations on the New South Wales Mid North Coast, putting local supply in jeopardy. The disease, Panama disease race 1, is threatening a banana supply shortage of the Lady Finger and Ducasse banana varieties. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2021-01-12/panama-disease-takes-hold-banana-plantations-coffs-harbour/13050498>

# Wollemi pines given special protected status after being saved from bushfire disaster – The Guardian, 15 January 2021

# The world’s only known natural stand of Wollemi pines has become the first site in [New South Wales](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/new-south-wales) to be given special protected status to try to ensure its survival for future generations. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/15/nsw-wollemi-pines-given-special-protected-status-after-being-saved-from-bushfire-disaster>

# Rare pink flannel flowers bloom after bushfires – Australian Geographic, 18 January 2021

# On a stony, bushfire-ravaged slope overlooking a Blue Mountains valley near Katoomba, NSW, ultra-rare pink flannel flowers bloom in their thousands, bringing new life and colour to landscape still charred by the fiery summer of 2019/20. <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/news/2021/01/rare-pink-flannel-flowers-bloom-after-bushfires/?utm_source=website_cta&utm_medium=post_directory&utm_campaign=on_site_links>

# Forests fight back after bushfire infernos – Australian Geographic, 21 January 2021About 70 per cent of plant species in Australia’s eucalypt forests will survive bushfires through defence mechanisms developed over millions of years. Five scientists from Griffith University and the Australian National University conducted an expert review of scientific research around forest fire recovery. <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/news/2021/01/forests-fight-back-after-bushfire-infernos/>

# Covid-19: Dartmoor lockdown crowds 'destroying' ancient woods – BBC News, 27 January 2021

An influx of lockdown visitors taking exercise on Dartmoor has raised concerns about an ancient woodland. Devon county councillor Philip Sanders said people had been camping, making fires and stripping moss from the trees at Wistman's Wood. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-devon-55808392>

**Events & Opportunities**

**2022 Research Grants - The Australian Flora Foundation**

The Australian Flora Foundation is calling for applications to their 2022 research grants. The Foundation will provide between $5000 - $15,000 for original scientific projects on the biology and cultivation of Australian plants. Applications due 15 March 2021.For more information head to the website <http://aff.org.au/grants/grant-criteria/>

**Val Williams scholarship – Australian Plants Society NSW**

The North Shore Group of the Australian Plants Society NSW is offering the 13th Annual Val Williams Scholarship in Botany. The scholarship provides $3000 to a student completing an Honours, Masters or PhD project that contributes to knowledge on the ecology, conservation, or propagation of native plants in Sydney and the surrounding region. Applications close 5 March 2021. For more information please email scholarship@blandfordia.org.au

**Orchid Mini Symposium- Australian National Herbarium**
A free, online orchid mini symposium is being held on Tuesday 2nd February 2021 from 9:30am - 12:30pm (AEDT). Organised by the Australian National Herbarium to honour the distinguished career of Dr Mark Clements the theme of the event is 'advances in Australian orchid research'. For a list of speakers see the graphic below. To join the symposium click this link ([https://webcast.csiro.au/#/webcasts/markclementssymposium](https://webcast.csiro.au/?fbclid=IwAR1hiFKPNDYe4W5W9oijacjdF4MyiRD2RoR97L-OkKX5y9RVGe8nGBGhLNI#/webcasts/markclementssymposium)) at the time specified above (no registrations required).

**TEDx talk recording - The other pandemic: Can we save our native plants from extinction?**
In this talk, Dr Karen Sommerville, Research Scientist at the Australian Institute of Botanical Science introduces us to seed banking, one tool we can use to protect our precious plants, and our future – provided we act quickly. <https://tedxsydney.com/talk/the-other-pandemic-can-we-save-our-native-plants-from-extinction-karen-sommerville/>