

Plant Cuttings – May 2025

Buffel kerfuffle: should the invasive grass be listed as a weed of national significance in Australia? – The Guardian, 3 May 2025

Buffel is a simple grass causing an almighty kerfuffle across the country as it progresses through nomination as a weed of national significance.

The perennial grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) is native to Africa and was accidentally introduced to the Australian outback via seeds hitchhiking on camel harnesses, before being deliberately planted through the early and mid-20th century as a summer-growing pasture. It grows in tall tufts with a fluffy flowering head and has spread through the arid and semi-arid rangelands of inland Australia.

Many farmers love buffel. It is a good-quality, drought-resistant cattle feed. It regenerates quickly after fire and can colonise bare ground, reducing dust and erosion. But its quick and aggressive growth makes it an invasive species, outcompeting natives, and its highly flammable nature fuels wildfires. Buffel is particularly problematic in Indigenous desert communities, where it takes enormous effort and finances to control.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/may/03/buffel-kerfuffle-should-the-invasive-grass-be-listed-as-a-weed-of-national-significance-in-australia>

How to enjoy Australia's wilderness areas responsibly – SBS Audio, 6 May 2025

Whether you're checking out wildflowers for the first time or are an experienced traveller exploring the outback, being a respectful visitor in the bush ensures that Australia's precious native plants and animals can be enjoyed by everyone.

This means, staying to designated roads and tracks, following signage and advice, not littering or damaging the landscape, and not removing native plant species or wildlife.

Terry Dunham is a citizen scientist and native orchid researcher from Albany in south-west Western Australia—a region in which he has enjoyed exploring since he was a child.

"It is always astonishing to witness the huge diversity of plant species, which exist in Western Australia. Our south-west region is one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, and were fortunate to enjoy the wildflowers all year round," Terry says.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/podcast-episode/how-to-enjoy-australias-wilderness-areas-responsibly/8o1jnbh4a>

Barmah National Park grasslands thriving after removal of feral horses – ABC News, 10 May 2025

Standing on the banks of Barmah Lake, you might spot spoonbills, pelicans and egrets bathing at the water's edge. It would be just a glimpse of the 270 animal species and 500 native plants that live in Barmah National Park — a landscape that has started to thrive since the controversial decision to remove its population of wild horses.

The park sits on Yorta Yorta country, stretching across the flood plains of the Murray River in northern Victoria. It is part of the largest river red gum forest in the world and home to internationally recognised wetlands. The native vegetation has started to regenerate since the horses were removed, much to the delight of local ecologists.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-10/barmah-national-park-bouces-back-after-brumby-removal/105150082>

Australian natives supporting biodiversity & habitat in the suburbs – ABC Radio, 10 May 2025

Australian Native Plants are more important than ever, helping to support biodiversity and support habitat in our suburbs.

President of the Conservation of our Threatened Species, Jeff Reid joined Deb Tribe and Sophie Thomson to share his knowledge on what to plant for the best results in South Australia.

<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/talkbackgardening/tbg-jeff-reid/105277626>

Lord Howe Island's famous Kentia palms challenge Darwin's evolutionary theory – ABC News, 12 May 2025

The soil beneath Lord Howe Island's famous Kentia palms could hold the key to unlocking an evolutionary mystery that has been confounding scientists since the time of Charles Darwin. The 19th-century biologist theorised that species needed to be geographically isolated in order to evolve and diversify.

But a long-term study by Imperial College London is testing how and why two varieties of Kentia palm have diverged while growing side by side for a million years on the remote island off Australia's east coast.

"We have found something totally different from what we thought was the case for species diversity," said Vincent Savolainen from the university's Department of Life Sciences.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-12/kentia-palms-lord-howe-island-challenge-evolutionary-theory/105173330>

The essential guide to Australian native plants – Better Homes and Gardens, 12 May 2025

Native plants have never been more popular and they can be easily incorporated into any Australian garden. If you want to create an all-Australian native landscape, then an organic, naturalistic design works best.

"Think crushed granite pathways, timber sleepers for edging beds and rustic recycled containers," says gardening expert and horticulturalist Roger Fox.

“Avoid formality and instead use curved and fluid lines for the layout.”

You can use a variety of grasses, desert plants, shrubs, ground cover, succulents, herbs, food plants, fruit and berries to create a diverse Australian native garden.

<https://www.bhg.com.au/garden/gardening/australian-native-plants/>

Isabella Tree talks about the wonders of rewilding – ABC Radio, 15 May 2025

What would happen if you let nature take the reins?

In 2001, author and conservationist Isabella Tree let nature reclaim a massive tract of farmland in the English countryside, and the results were astounding.

Paul Verhoeven talked with Isabella about what occurred, the book (and documentary) based on her adventures, and how liberating it can be to let your hair grow out.

<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/overnights/lady-burnell-isabella-tree-on-rewilding/105294068>

Whoops, a daisy: Meet the flower stripped of its native species status – Cosmos Magazine, 18 April 2025

For 170 years, botanists have believed that the rare daisy fleabane (*Erigeron conyzoides*) is an Australian native flower.

First described in 1855, the species is restricted to the alpine areas of NSW and Victoria. But it hasn't been collected in NSW since 1978, and was recently listed as endangered in Victoria after not being sighted for 13 years.

When botanists rediscovered the species last year, genetic testing revealed a surprising taxonomic twist – that this presumed native is actually an introduced weed.

How does an imposter like this go unnoticed for so long? Let's delve into the story of this wily weed.

<https://cosmosmagazine.com/nature/plants/flower-loses-native-species-status>

Rare Tasmanian eucalypt primed for climate change as others decline – ABC News, 19 May 2025

Eucalypts vulnerable to climate change are in decline across Australia, but scientists say a rare one found only in southern Tasmania is actually expanding its range in part because it is so "well adapted" to warmer, drier conditions.

The endemic Risdon peppermint (*Eucalyptus risdonii*) is a "scraggly-looking tree" with unusual blue leaves, found around Risdon Vale on Hobart's eastern shore. Species distribution modelling by consultant Peter Harrison during his PhD predicted an increase in the extent and number of areas suitable for the species by the end of this century.

Plant scientist Rebecca Jones, of the Eucalypt Genetics group at the University of Tasmania (UTAS), said the species had proven its ability to adapt to harsh conditions.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-19/rare-eucalyptus-risdonii-expands-footprint-adapting-to-change/105302654>

Surviving swamps on South Australia's parched Fleurieu Peninsula are a lifeline to wildlife – and farmers – The Conversation, 20 May 2025

South Australia is famously the driest state on the driest inhabited continent. But even for South Australia, the current drought is extreme. Rainfall has been the lowest on record across large areas. When drought strikes and water sources dry up, life becomes hard for wildlife. In these conditions, perennial water sources become enormously valuable.

Dotted across the drought-stricken Fleurieu Peninsula south of Adelaide are more than 850 swampy wetlands. When the landscape dries out, these swamps act as refuges. Animals, birds, insects and reptiles come from far and wide, drawn by permanent spring-fed water, good habitat, diverse plant species and cooler, more humid micro-climates. These swamps are vital habitat for the critically endangered Mount Lofty Ranges southern emu-wren.

Drainage channels were cut through many of these swamps in the early days of settlement, in an effort to turn them into pasture. The Fleurieu swamps are now considered an endangered ecological community. More than 90% of the remaining swamps are located on private property.

<https://theconversation.com/surviving-swamps-on-south-australias-parched-fleurieu-peninsula-are-a-lifeline-to-wildlife-and-farmers-256238>

Invasive plant pathogen myrtle rust detected at National Museum of Australia, sparking concerns for eucalypts – ABC News, 21 May 2025

The invasive plant pathogen myrtle rust has been detected near the National Museum of Australia in Canberra, concerning experts.

Myrtle rust is a bright yellow-looking fungus that infects plants, like other fungal infections, by penetrating into a plant's living tissue.

Originally from South America, the single strain that's made it to Australia can be found on a plant's young leaves, flower buds and young fruits and will in severe cases appear as a yellow sticky powder.

It targets the eucalypt family — which includes not just eucalypts but tea trees, lilly pillies and other plants — with sometimes devastating effect.

Founder of the Invasive Species Council Tim Low said 16 species of rainforest tree were likely to go extinct without emergency intervention.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-21/invasive-plant-pathogen-myrtle-rust-detected-at-national-museum/105315816>

Hyde Park islands to be stripped as shot-hole borer infestation takes hold – ABC News, 21 May 2025

Vegetation on the two lake islands at Perth's historic Hyde Park will be cleared over six weeks, after it was found to be heavily infested with polyphagous shot-hole borer.

The tiny, invasive, tree-killing pest was detected in 2021 and has since led to the destruction of more than 4,000 trees in the Perth metropolitan area as the state government follows an intensive elimination strategy.

Laid out as a classical English garden in 1890 and beloved for its Moreton Bay figs and London Plane trees, Hyde Park has been seriously threatened by the shot-hole borer.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-21/hyde-park-islands-stripped-amid-shot-hole-borer-infestation/105318448>

Mystery over source of latest tomato rugose virus find in Victoria – ABC News, 21 May 2025

New South Wales authorities are investigating the source of a devastating tomato virus detected again in Victoria after outbreaks in South Australia.

The tomato brown rugose fruit virus has been found at the same glasshouse in northern Victoria where it was detected in January. Routine testing of seedlings arriving at Katunga Fresh, which is still under quarantine, found they were infected with the destructive exotic disease. But the infested seedlings came from a commercial nursery in NSW, a state with no previous links to the virus.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-21/brown-rugose-tomato-virus-detection-linked-to-new-south-wales/105308614>

Raising Rarity – Gardening Australia, 23 May 2025

At the Cranbourne site of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Victoria, a program for schools has been running for two years. It sees students taking an active role in the conservation of some rare native plants. Called 'Raising Rarity', it's a citizen science program to help support the work of the RBGV by collecting data and seed of certain threatened species.

One secondary school is growing Swamp Everlasting – students say they love being responsible for cultivate the plant to create a new back-up colony at their campus, which could provide propagating material if anything happened to the plants at the botanic gardens or in the wild.

A primary school that is part of the raising rarity project is propagating grey billy-buttons so the new plants can be reintroduced into the wild, to boost the local populations.

The students attend workshops on how to identify the species, then learn how to grow the plants and collect seed for the RBGV staff, who then germinate it.

<https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/how-to/raising-rarity/105319970>

Half the remaining habitat of Australia's most at-risk species is outside protected areas – The Conversation, 23 May 2025

More and more Australian species are being listed as critically endangered – the final stage before extinction in the wild. Hundreds of species of plants and animals are now at this point. For a species to be critically endangered, it is on death's door. Its numbers must have shrunk alarmingly and its outlook is bleak. Why? One common reason is habitat loss. If we convert bushland or swamps into farmland or suburbs, we reduce how much space species have to survive.

Our new research examines how much habitat is left for 305 of Australia's critically endangered species – more than 70% of the total. Alarmingly, we found almost half the remaining habitat is outside the protected area estate. That means the last remaining areas where these species are clinging on could very easily be cleared.

<https://theconversation.com/half-the-remaining-habitat-of-australias-most-at-risk-species-is-outside-protected-areas-256818>

Rare Aussie orchids win gold at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show – Better Homes and Gardens, 23 May 2025

It's not often that an Aussie native is a headliner in a flower show as big as the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, but this year, we've made it!

The Orchid Conservation Chelsea, in partnership with GrowTropicals, created an exhibit this year called: Orchids in the Wild – Hong Kong, Australia, Asia & The Pacific Islands.

It won gold in the Floral Medal category of the Chelsea Flower Show, as announced by RHS on Instagram on May 21st.

In the Australian zone, there were two orchid species that were spotlighted, Blue Sun orchids (*Thelymitra* spp.) and Donkey orchids (*Diuris* spp.), both of which are found in south-west Australia. The University of Western Australia were key to creating the Australia zone in the exhibit.

<https://www.bhg.com.au/garden/garden-tours/australian-orchid-at-chelsea-flower-show/>

Critically endangered species are falling through conservation cracks – Cosmos Magazine, 24 May 2025

Conservationists and farmers want “substantial investment” to reverse environmental damage which has put more than 220 critically endangered species “on the edge.”

Partly or completely reliant on unprotected land, such endangered species remain vulnerable to agricultural and industrial development. Around half of the 85,000 sq km of habitat on which these species rely is outside the protected estate.

Sixty percent of the globe's land surface has been directly modified by human activities, which makes habitat loss a key threat for most species. Clearing of land for agriculture is the leading cause of such habitat loss, and the extinction risk that goes with it, for those species

involved. In Queensland, for example, 6800 km² of woody vegetation was cleared in 2018-2019, 93% of that to support agriculture.

<https://cosmosmagazine.com/earth/agriculture/failing-endangered-species/>

Defence Housing Australia fined for unlawful land clearing at Darwin's Lee Point – ABC News, 26 May 2025

A Commonwealth-owned defence housing company has been fined more than \$18,000 for unlawfully clearing land at a popular birdwatching area on the outskirts of Darwin.

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) is planning to build a residential housing complex for military personnel and their families at the site at Lee Point, to support an expanding defence presence in the Northern Territory.

The project has long faced opposition from environmentalists and some Larrakia people due to the risks posed to cultural heritage and threatened species, including the Gouldian finch.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-26/defence-housing-australia-fined-unlawful-land-clearing-lee-point/105335992>

Scientists stumble upon 'rare' Aussie bush flower thought extinct for 86 years – Yahoo News, 28 May 2025

A native plant thought to be extinct for over 86 years has been rediscovered, and the Aussie scientists who stumbled upon it during a rare bloom admit they were "super lucky" to be in the right place at the right time.

The "elusive bush-pea" had long lived up to its name until Robert T Miller, an experienced botanist, was out on field work recently with colleagues west of Wollongong in New South Wales. They were searching through the "swampy habitat" in the Upper Nepean State Conservation Area as part of the state government's Saving our Species (SoS) program when he spotted a flower in bloom.

<https://au.yahoo.com/news/scientists-stumble-upon-rare-aussie-bush-flower-thought-extinct-for-86-years-053718137.html>

Threatened species finding -Winged Peppercress herb found on Gunbar sandhills – The Riverine Grazier, 28 May 2025

When Stacey and Ian Lugsdin undertook a Local Land Services project to fence off some of the remnant endangered sandhills on their properties at Warrendale and Nauru near Gunbar in 2018 and 2019, they had no idea the journey that they were about to undertake.

Despite commencing fencing during the 2018/19 drought, the sites benefited almost immediately from the removal of the stock. Slowly, the old needlewood trees began to sucker, small green shoots appeared on ancient rosewood trees, and the ground cover of annual weeds moved slowly to perennial grasses. Some of the sites were direct seeded and

once the rains came, small acacias and hopbushes began appearing in the seeding lines, a variety of saltbushes also appeared, and the old white Cypress pines began to seed.

<https://arr.news/2025/05/28/threatened-species-finding-winged-peppercress-herb-found-on-gunbar-sandhills/>

Farmers harvesting for oil and fencing say new rules ruining livelihoods – ABC News, 28 May 2025

New South Wales farmers who have harvested native plants on their land for eucalyptus oil and brush fencing for decades say new restrictions are ruining livelihoods.

Eucalyptus oil has been distilled from blue mallee around West Wyalong in the Central West region of New South Wales since the early 1900s, and for the last 50 years, mallee-broombush has been harvested to provide a popular alternative to timber or metal fencing.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-28/mallee-broombush-eucalyptus-farmers-angry-nsw-restrictions/105341880>

Events and Opportunities

XII International Rangeland Congress 2025 – Adelaide SA, 2-6 June 2025

The Australian Organising Committee of the XII International Rangeland Congress, on behalf of the Australian Rangeland Society and the International Rangeland Congress Continuing Committee, invites you to participate in the International Rangeland Congress to be held June 2-6, 2025 at the Adelaide Convention Centre, Adelaide, Australia.

<https://irc2025.rangelandcongress.org/>

Draft threat abatement plan for ecosystem degradation, habitat loss and species decline due to invasion by introduced grasses

Submissions due 13 June

Draft threat abatement plan for ecosystem degradation, habitat loss and species decline due to invasion of northern Australia by introduced gamba grass (*Andropogon gayanus*), para grass (*Urochloa mutica*), olive hymenachne (*Hymenachne amplexicaulis*), mission grass (*Cenchrus polystachios*) and annual mission grass (*Cenchrus pedicellatus*).

<https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/draft-threat-abatement-plan-for-introduced-grasses>

International Congress for Conservation Biology 2025 – Brisbane/Meanjin, 15-19 June 2025

ICCB is a global forum for addressing conservation challenges and for presenting new research in conservation science and practice.

With ~1,500 conservation professionals and students in attendance, ICCB is the major networking event for anyone interested in conservation.

SCB's 32nd International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB 2025) will take place in Brisbane/Meanjin, Australia at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC) from 15-19 June 2025!

<https://icriforum.org/events/iccb-2025/>

Species Survival Symposium 2025 – Sydney NSW, 2-3 July 2025

This 2-day event will bring together researchers, practitioners, First Nations people, Industry and Government representatives, and other experts and stakeholders in species conservation.

<https://www.aciucn.org.au/species-survival-symposium>

Australasian Myrtle Rust Conference 2025: From knowledge to impact – Auckland NZ, 16-17 June 2025

Many of Australasia's best-known and most highly valued native trees – from Australia's eucalypts to New Zealand's pōhutukawa – are in the family Myrtaceae. Many species in this family urgently need protection from myrtle rust, a disease caused by the globally dispersed pathogen *Austropuccinia psidii*.

Collaborative research efforts have improved our understanding of our myrtles, the pathogen, and plant/pathogen interactions. Management tools have been developed and deployed, and communities are rapidly mobilising to protect and conserve native plants.

Join us for the second Australasian Myrtle Rust Conference to share and learn about the latest research and management approaches. Be part of the conversation as we celebrate our mighty myrtles and the progress made towards protecting them.

<https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/biodiversity-biosecurity/ecosystem-resilience/beyond-myrtle-rust/australasian-myrtle-rust-conference-2025/>

23rd NSW Weeds Conference – Port Macquarie NSW, 4-7 August 2025

The NSW Weeds Conference is regarded as the premier event to discuss weeds and related vegetation and production issues. The conference is a biennially event conducted in partnership with a host council attracting up to 350 attendees from NSW and interstate.

<https://www.nswweedsconf.org.au/>

9th National NRM Knowledge Conference – Cairns QLD, 8-12 September 2025

Co-hosted by North Queensland regional NRMs (Cape York Natural Resource Management, Gulf Savannah NRM, Terrain NRM, NQ Dry Tropics NRM & NRM Regions Queensland) and running from the 8-12th in and around Cairns, our sector's conference is for anyone working, participating or interested in natural resource management – to share, learn and inspire.

<https://nrmregionsaustralia.com.au/articles/9th-national-nrm-knowledge-conference/>

15th Biennial International Society for Seed Science Conference 2025 – Perth WA, 15-19 September 2025

The International Society for Seed Science fosters research, education, and communication in the scientific understanding of seeds, and the ISSS 2025 will bring together, for the first time, two of the Society's premier events as a joint conference to celebrate seeds and to inspire synergies across the seed science community.

<https://iss2025.com.au/>

Building Private Land Conservation in Western Australia – Fremantle WA, 16-17 September 2025

Western Australia is home to 8 of 15 national biodiversity hotspots making it a significant area of interest for conservation efforts. With the right policy and support from government, we can revitalise WA's dormant covenanting program and attract funding for public-private partnerships for protected areas creation in Western Australia.

The symposium will bring together leaders from private and public conservation organisations across Australia to explore the future direction of private-land conservation in WA.

<https://events.humanitix.com/building-private-land-conservation-in-western-australia>

2025 National Landcare Conference – Gold Coast QLD, 24 September 2025

The program dates for 2025 are:

Sunday 21 September – First Nations Gathering and NextGen Summit

Monday 22 September – Conference and Welcome Reception

Tuesday 23 September – Conference and 2025 National Landcare Awards Gala Dinner

Wednesday 24 September – Field Trip Program.

We welcome Landcare champion and ABC TV presenter, Costa Georgiadis, as the master of ceremonies for both the National Landcare Conference and National Landcare Awards events.

<https://nationallandcareconference.org.au/>

Australasian Seed Science Conference 2025 – Horsham VIC, 22-25 September 2025

Hosted by the Australian Grains Genebank and Australian Seed Bank Partnership, the ASSC2025 is a leading conference exploring research and innovation across the agricultural and biodiversity conservation sectors. This conference provides a platform for Australasian seed researchers, industries, policymakers, and communities to promote research, insights, technologies, and exchange ideas on how we can address similar scientific, legal and policy challenges.

<https://www.seedpartnership.org.au/events/assc25/>

Australian Land Conservation Alliance 2025 Annual Conference – Cairns QLD, 7-10 October 2025

Across Australia and beyond, diverse communities, businesses, and organisations are leading with solutions that tackle the biggest environmental challenges of our time by enabling, delivering, and scaling conservation, land management, and restoration action.

The 2025 ALCA Conference will showcase these efforts, celebrating the people and partnerships driving this work: from Australia's First Nations leaders to dedicated conservation, farming and business professionals, community volunteers, and local

champions— their collective onground efforts strengthen the cross-sector and cross-cultural solutions we urgently need.

<https://www.alcaconference.org.au/>

2025 BGANZ Congress - Advancing our reach: Innovation and leadership in botanic gardens – Canberra ACT, 2-5 November 2025

The next BGANZ Congress will be in Canberra, on Ngunnawal Country. The main venue will be Old Parliament House (OPH), with unique social events at both OPH and the gardens, and field trips from subalpine regions to the sea, as well as our national public institutions focusing on education and horticulture.

Congress attendees will have the opportunity to share knowledge and experience to advance the role of botanic gardens and arboreta as globally recognised centres of excellence for plant science, conservation, education, and outreach.

<https://www.bganz.org.au/2025-bganz-congress-2/>