

Plant Cuttings – December 2025

Labor to fast-track nature law enforcement due to fears of land-clearing rush – Sydney Morning Herald, 28 November 2025

Environment Minister Murray Watt is so worried that farmers will rush to rev up the bulldozers and fell swaths of trees on their land before the Albanese government's landmark nature reforms that he is ordering laws into effect within days, demanding his department crack down on illegal activity.

"We don't want to see a rush to destroying the kind of vegetation that will now be protected under the law, and people need to know that if they break the law, we will be cracking down on that," Watt said on Friday.

The Albanese government cut a deal with the Greens and passed the ambitious bill through parliament on the last sitting day of the year. One of the most controversial changes, described by the National Farmers' Federation as "bitterly disappointing", is the removal of the "continued use" provision from the act, meaning that the clearing of native vegetation regrowth, including trees, that is more than 15 years old will no longer be exempt from scrutiny under law.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/labor-to-fast-track-nature-law-enforcement-due-to-fears-of-land-clearing-rush-20251128-p5nj6j.html>

Native bloodroot plant named after iconic Australian Hills hoist clothesline – ABC News, 29 November 2025

The perpendicular arms of the humble backyard rotary clothesline have provided the inspiration for a newly named species of Australian bloodroot. The native plant has been named *Haemodorum collevatum*, drawing on the Latin words "collis", meaning hills, and "levatum", to lift up (or, in this case, hoist).

The field of taxonomy sometimes look to popular figures, such as David Attenborough or a Star Wars character, when choosing scientific and common names for new species of plant or animal. Other times, a name stems from a defining characteristic. For systematic botanist Russell Barrett, from the Botanic Gardens of Sydney, it was the tall centre flower and unusual branches of the bloodroot that stood out.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2025-11-29/hills-hoist-clothesline-bloodroot-australian-invention-plant/106075212>

Snowy Mountains farmers call for support in managing spread of invasive weed African lovegrass – ABC News, 29 November 2025

If Ross Sherlock could travel 50 years back in time, he would give a grave warning to New South Wales Snowy Mountains landholders about the straw-like plant that had started popping up. The impact of African lovegrass on the landscape is profound.

The merino and beef cattle farmer knows people who have given up working on the land after the invasive weed choked out native grasses and rendered paddocks unproductive.

Mr Sherlock spends about \$100,000 each year spot-spraying the weed to keep it under control on his 1,700-hectare property north-west of Cooma.

"Anywhere that there's the slightest chance of bare ground, it's there," he said.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-11-29/african-lovegrass-weed-chokes-out-native-grass-snowy-mountains/106006854>

Beating buffel: From that to this – Alice Springs News, 3 December 2025

COMMENT by ALEX NELSON

When I moved to Pitchi Richi Sanctuary in October 2022, buffel grass smothered almost the entire site. Aside from a small area around the resident caretaker's cottage, I assessed that buffel grass comprised a minimum of 99.9% of the groundcover across the entire property. I commenced physical removal of the buffel in early December 2022.

There was one native hibiscus (*Radyera farragei*) barely alive in the abandoned garden at the caretaker's cottage. It was obviously planted there some years earlier. Aside from this individual, there was not one native hibiscus plant anywhere at Pitchi Richi.

Following heavy rain in April 2023, I was surprised to discover a few native hibiscus seedlings germinating in areas where I had recently cleared buffel grass. These young plants were a long distance from the struggling hibiscus at the cottage, so I surmised these had germinated from seed lying dormant in the soil for many years.

<https://www.alicespringsnews.com.au/posts/beating-buffel-from-that-to-this>

Six native trees poisoned along Noosa's Sunshine Beach – ABC News, 5 December 2025

Six Australian native trees have been poisoned on public land along one of Queensland's most expensive and exclusive beachside streets. The Noosa Council says the "very intentional and calculated act" occurred along a 55-metre stretch of dunes at Sunshine Beach.

The suburb has developed a high profile with properties sold for tens of millions of dollars in recent years, including to TV presenter Karl Stefanovic, former prime minister Kevin Rudd and mining magnate Gina Rinehart. The six mature trees included a coast banksia, beach bird's eye and a tuckeroo, each critical for ensuring the sand dunes remain stable and for protecting wildlife.

Noosa Council environment services manager Richard MacGillivray said he was "extremely disturbed" by the attack, particularly given the steepness of the area and the effort required.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-05/six-native-trees-poisoned-along-noosas-sunshine-beach/106105402>

Australian Christmas in full bloom as flora and fauna burst with colour – ABC News, 6 December 2025

The world's largest mistletoe, a spider the size of your fingernail and colourful bell-shaped plants that flower just in time for the festive season. These iconic species of flora and fauna are some of the natural wonders to look forward to at this time of the year in Australia.

As the harsh heat of summer begins to dry out Australia's bushland, "bursts of colour" have emerged across WA's south-west. The moodjar tree, also known as the WA Christmas tree, flowers during the Noongar season of Birak and coincides with the holiday season. The parasitic tree is also the world's largest mistletoe species.

Former Department of Biodiversity, Conservations and Attractions entomologist Darryl Hardie said he had noticed the tree blooming in abundance this year.

"I've noticed the bushes going from this lovely green and starting to get a bit grey or bluey green because it's dying off a little bit as [the weather] dries out," he said.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-06/christmas-flora-and-fauna/106105702>

Australia's new land clearing, regrowth laws spark concern among farmers – ABC News, 7 December 2025

Farmers are concerned Australia's new environmental laws will restrict their ability to manage their land responsibly.

Following a deal between Labor and the Greens last week, the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation laws have introduced tightened controls for land clearing and larger fines for breaches.

In Queensland, native trees, including brigalow, mulga, boree, gidgee and eucalypt, are periodically cleared on properties to manage thick regrowth.

Josh Phelps runs cattle on properties near Tambo, Brigalow and Bauhinia, in the heart of Queensland's scrub country.

"To put a blanket-type ruling over a nation, I just find it hard to grapple with," he said.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-07/farmer-concerns-as-australian-land-clearing-laws-tighten/106104878>

Reedy Creek Reserve's Paperbark Forest Walk in Agnes Water closed after tourist and environment concerns – ABC News, 7 December 2025

When this paperbark forest floods, there's nothing quite like it, Jo Axford says.

"That peaty smell, the birds going everywhere, you feel like you're in some kind of enchanted forest," she says. She's talking about the Reedy Creek Reserve, a rare coastal park near Agnes Water in central Queensland, privately owned by Bush Heritage Australia. The corridor is teeming with rare plants and wildlife, but its beauty has been shut away from the public.

Ms Axford said her organisation was concerned over-tourism was damaging the fragile ecosystem, while there were also visitor safety issues around road access and parking. The trail previously allowed the public to step through the paperbark forest with the help of a

boardwalk and stepping stones built by the conservation group. Ms Axford said the walk was only ever designed for locals, but increasingly, busloads of tourists were being dropped off at the site along with carloads of visitors. She said by 2022 there were 100,000 people per year visiting the site, and some would use the walk as a photo opportunity instead of appreciating the land's conservation significance.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-07/agnes-water-reedy-creek-reserve-closed-paperbark-walk/106100738>

Noosa's native gardens – Noosa Today, 8 December 2025

A book on Noosa's native plants, 'Flowering Now', written by Stephanie Haslam will assist local residents to create gardens that reflect the natural environment and encourage native wildlife and all proceeds from sales of the book will go back to conservation.

The publication highlights the natural vegetation on the Sunshine Coast, from coastal beaches, wallum heathland to mangroves protecting the estuary, up the rivers, through paperbark woodlands and eucalypt forests, to patches of shady rainforest and bare rocky mountains.

In her book Stephanie, a Noosa Integrated Catchment Association member, guides readers to find different plant groups, set out in 10 broad vegetation communities, in different conditions of climate, aspect and underlying geology.

The book covers some of the more common plants, but by no means all. It is an overview of the more obvious ones – those you might recognise in your own garden, notice in local landscaping or see in the bush.

<https://noosatoday.com.au/news/08-12-2025/noosas-native-gardens/>

Sydney Harbour Bridge to transform into living botanical wonder for NYE 2025 – Mumbrella, 8 December 2025

Vandal will lead the creative direction and projections for Sydney New Year's Eve, reimaging the Harbour Bridge as a vibrant celebration of Australian plant life.

The announcement:

The City of Sydney has engaged leading creative studio VANDAL to deliver the creative direction and innovative large-scale projections for Sydney New Year's Eve 2025, transforming the Sydney Harbour Bridge into a vibrant, living celebration of the natural world.

This year's creative theme will be brought to life through a striking concept developed by VANDAL – one that imagines native plants reclaiming the city for a night of colour, movement and light. The pylons will shift from solid stone to living surface – blooming, breathing, and alive with the forms and energy of Australia's botanical life.

<https://mumbrella.com.au/sydney-harbour-bridge-to-transform-into-living-botanical-wonder-for-nye-2025-909891>

Australia has new laws to protect nature. Do they signal an end to native forest logging? – The Conversation, 8 December 2025

Reforms to Australia's nature laws have passed federal parliament. A longstanding exemption that meant federal environment laws did not apply to native logging has finally been removed from the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Native forest logging will now be subject to national environmental standards – legally binding rules supposed to set clear goals for environmental protection. This should be a win for the environment, and some have celebrated it as an end to native forest logging in Australia. But the reality is such celebrations are premature. We don't have all the details of the new standards, or know how they will be enforced and monitored.

<https://theconversation.com/australia-has-new-laws-to-protect-nature-do-they-signal-an-end-to-native-forest-logging-271203>

Taronga Zoo to 'rewild' cleared farmland in northern NSW with native Australian animals – ABC News, 10 December 2025

A huge piece of land in northern NSW will be transformed into a safe haven for endangered native animals including koalas, platypus, spotted quolls and regent honeyeater birds bred at Taronga Zoo.

The Taronga Conservation Society has acquired 3,050 hectares of cleared farmland and remnant vegetation in the Nandewar Range near Bingara in the North West Slopes region. It is about a hundred times the size of its zoo on the shores of Sydney Harbour in Mosman.

Taronga, as part of the program considered a first for zoos internationally, will plant up to 1 million seedlings within the acquired land in an effort to restore natural wildlife corridors and re-establish critically endangered Box-Gum Woodlands, which have been decimated by land clearing.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-10/taronga-zoo-to-rewild-cleared-farmland-with-native-animals/106121552>

Still Wallum, an artistic tribute to the living Wallum landscape – The Echo, 10 December 2025

Art, ecology, and community come together in a new exhibition which invites the public to experience what still thrives, and what could be lost. Still Wallum, presented by Save Wallum, is a free annual art exhibition celebrating the endangered Wallum ecosystems of Brunswick Heads. This year's event will be held at Wheel of Life Studio, with the official opening on Wednesday 17 December, timed to coincide with the vibrant Brunswick Heads Christmas Twilight Market.

Organisers say the exhibition invites the community to reconnect with the rich biodiversity of the region, through stunning large-format photography and ceramic tributes to the vulnerable glossy black cockatoo.

<https://www.echo.net.au/2025/12/still-wallum-an-artistic-tribute-to-the-living-wallum-landscape/>

Spillover from protected areas helps ecosystems survive – The University of Western Australia, 11 December 2025

Spillovers from protected areas such as national parks and wildlife reserves can play a significant role in boosting biodiversity beyond their boundaries with potential benefits to people through ecosystem services such as climate mitigation, water retention and erosion control.

Published in Nature the study by Professor Graeme Cumming, from The University of Western Australia's Oceans Institute and School of Earth and Oceans, looked in depth at vegetation spillovers – the projected difference in plant composition made by protected areas to land adjacent to their boundaries – across Australia.

The results showed that 71 per cent (2,189) of 3,063 of the measured protected areas provided vegetation spillovers within 5km of the boundary, with this proportion declining predictably at greater distances. In Western Australia, some of the protected areas with the largest spillover effects at 5km included Monadnocks Conservation Park, Lane Poole Reserve and Beelu National Park.

<https://www.uwa.edu.au/news/article/2025/december/spillover-from-protected-areas-helps-ecosystems-survive>

Orchid enthusiasts call for greater protection for native species facing habitat threats – ABC News, 14 December 2025

In March 1802 when Matthew Flinders was circumnavigating Terra Australis on the Investigator his botanist Robert Brown recorded the first sighting of a South Australian orchid. It was a *Genoplesium nigricans* found near Port Lincoln on the Eyre Peninsula. Two centuries later, new orchid species are still being discovered in the region, but many are under threat.

Elliston retiree Shane Graves is obsessed with native terrestrial orchids and said he was happiest when lying face down in a pile of leaves searching through the lens of his digital SLR camera for undiscovered species in the bush. He has an orchid named after him — the Elliston leek orchid, *Prasophyllum gravesii*, which he discovered near the local golf course.

"Not a pretty name, but it's my orchid," Mr Graves said. His passion for native orchids grew through his love of photography

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-14/new-orchids-discovered-habitat-threat-mount-wedge/106072786>

The Kaurua cultural program inspiring students in Adelaide's south – ABC News, 14 December 2025

There's barely a peep of sound beyond the gushes of wind and the song of birds, as high school students take turns trying to spark an ember by rubbing a long wooden spindle into a traditional fireboard. Quietly guided by elder Karl Winda Telfer, the First Nations group of Seaford Secondary College students are learning how to make fire.

"They learn about fire and making fire the old way ... do that ceremony with that fire, with that smoke too, honouring the ancestors," Karl said.

Learning the fire ceremony is part of a unique program being held in collaboration with the school at Kanyanyapilla, a 3.5 hectare pocket of land nestled in South Australia's McLaren Vale wine region. Started two years ago, the Tikkandi Program immerses students in Kaurna language, culture and stories alongside caring for country.

"Tikkandi in language means to sit down on country," Karl explained.

After the fire ceremony, the students move to a gigantic gum that towers over the site and nearby vineyards. Karl calls it the grandmother tree, and he asks the students to connect to the tree and country by placing their hands on the broad width of its trunk.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-14/sa-students-find-connection-through-kaurna-program/106136626>

Hidden clues in colonial journals reveal why Tasmania's remote west keeps burning – The Conversation, 16 December 2025

In 1830, the Palawa people were in the midst of their guerilla war against the British colonists taking their land in what is now Tasmania. After flaring in the mid-1820s, intensifying violence had claimed hundreds of First Nations and settler lives. In response, the Governor of Van Diemen's Land, Sir George Arthur, commissioned the preacher George Augustus Robinson to seek conciliation.

Guided by Nuenonne woman Truganini and her cleverman husband Woureddy, Robinson travelled southwest across Tasmania to persuade the largely isolated Toogee nation to be relocated to a Christian mission. They were assured they would eventually be allowed to return. The promise was broken. Almost 200 members of the Toogee and other Lutruwita nations were exiled to Flinders Island, where most died.

The consequences of Robinson's empty promise have lingered ever since, from the erosion of Palawa culture to the abrupt end to millennia of cultural burning. In our time, Tasmania's west is thought of as wilderness – wild and lightly populated. Dry lightning storms triggered massive fires in 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2025, burning areas unused to fire.

To find out whether these fires were been made worse by the end of Indigenous cultural burning, we turned to Robinson's detailed journals. In our new research, we show Robinson made very rapid progress across treeless areas. Many of these are now dense scrub. This is the first time this scrubby thickening has been shown to have occurred at regional scale in Tasmania.

<https://theconversation.com/hidden-clues-in-colonial-journals-reveal-why-tasmanias-remote-west-keeps-burning-271623>

This Just In: The Yarra River's New 450-Metre Path Brimming with Native Greenery Is Here — Just in Time for Summer – Concrete Playground, 17 December 2025

You probably know NYC's High Line or Paris' Promenade Plantée; now get ready for the arrival of Melbourne's Greenline. The first of a five-site rejuvenation project has just been completed, bringing loads more green space and scenic boardwalks to the Yarra River – Birrarung. Stretching for 450 metres between Batman Avenue and the eastern edge of Federation Square, this reimagined spot is now ready to be explored by the public, launching just in time to offer even more stellar vantage points for the New Year's Eve fireworks.

Yet this project's benefits extend far beyond just a single night of fun. Visitors will now encounter 70 new native trees, over 25,000 native plants and 900 square metres of lawn, garden beds, seats and shaded resting areas, levelling up this central part of town. Meanwhile, this initial stage of the Greenline also features a 200-metre boardwalk, ideal for a riverside jog as the sun rises or a quiet spot for a lunch break. Complemented by a six-metre-wide promenade, there's no shortage of space to experience the river from a new perspective.

<https://concreteplayground.com/melbourne/design-style/yarra-river-greenline-opens>

Call for North Brooman nature reserve to protect 70-metre-tall 'Big Spotty' – ABC news, 17 December 2025

It is the sort of place where it is difficult to see the "tree" for the forest — even if it is 70 metres tall.

In North Brooman state forest, between Batemans Bay and Ulladulla on the NSW south coast, a magnificent spotted gum peeks out of the canopy. According to the national register of big trees, "big spotty" is the tallest recorded spotted gum in the world, and has a girth of just under 12 metres at chest height.

Nick Hopkins from Friends of the Forest Mogo compares it to a blue whale.

"But even that's not a fair comparison because it's much longer than a whale," he said. "It really defies words."

The general manager of Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens, Michael Anlezark, said local estimates that put the age of Big Spotty at 500 years were an "educated guess" that could not be verified without invasive procedures.

"In the scheme of things, it doesn't matter how old it is," he said "We just know it's very ancient."

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-12-17/big-spotty-spotted-gum-north-brooman-state-forest/106135758>

Spice up the season: the nutritional power of Australian flavours – The University of Queensland, 18 December 2025

Spices unique to Australia could transform end of year special occasions, holiday cooking and seasonal spreads adding bold flavours while delivering hidden nutritional benefits. A

University of Queensland-based study co-designed with Traditional Owners revealed 5 culturally significant native spice plants had potential to boost health, enhance flavour and support food innovation.

Adjunct Associate Professor Dale Chapman, an Indigenous bushfood entrepreneur and project leader, said that Australia was home to many edible native plants, many of which were still largely underutilised.

Dr Joseph Nastasi from UQ's School of Agriculture and Food Sustainability said they hoped to spark a new wave of value-added products and boosted opportunities for Indigenous-led bushfood enterprises.

"The goal was to explore lesser-known Australian native ingredients with a history of consumption and use," Dr Nastasi said.

<https://news.uq.edu.au/2025-12-spice-season-nutritional-power-australian-flavours>

Events and Opportunities

Victorian Biodiversity Conference (VicBioCon) – Melbourne VIC, 16-18 February 2026

VicBioCon is an annual scientific conference focused on highlighting biodiversity-related research and management projects based in the state of Victoria, Australia. The conference is held over three days towards the beginning of each year and is organised by a dedicated team of post-graduate students and professionals from a number of Victorian universities and organisations.

<https://www.vicbiocon.com/>

International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE) Congress 2026 – Cairns QLD, 26-29 July 2026

The 19th International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE) Congress invites academics, activists, practitioners, and visionaries from all over the world to explore the theme of “*Indigenous and Local Knowledge Connections: Honouring Heritage and Innovation*”

The International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE), founded in 1988, is a global network focused on preserving the links between human societies and the natural world. It provides a unique platform for participants to share research and initiatives from diverse disciplines related to human-nature relationships.

Registration and a Call for Abstracts is open.

<https://isecongress2026.org/>

13th International Conference on Cycad Biology (CYCAD2026) – Sydney NSW, 17-22 August 2026

The theme is “*Cultivating Conservation through Science and Horticulture*”.

CYCAD2026 will gather international delegates including academic researchers, conservation and horticultural experts, representatives from leading botanical institutions, and industry leaders and innovators.

Attendees will explore advancements in plant biology, genetics, ecological restoration, horticulture, and more—through keynote addresses, networking opportunities, and collaborative sessions.

Donate to support the running of the conference here: <https://www.rbg.vic.gov.au/cycad-2026>

15th Australasian Plant Conservation Conference (APCC15) – Port Douglas QLD, 24-28 August 2026

The 15th Australasian Plant Conservation Conference (APCC15) will be held at the Port Douglas Community Hall in the Queensland Wet Tropics from 24-28 August 2026.

With the overall theme '*Plant Conservation: Culture, Collaboration and Change*' APCC15 will explore these three spheres of native plant recovery through rainforest restoration partnerships, collaborations with Traditional Owner groups, impacts of climate change induced natural disasters, management of threatened species and communities, and biosecurity threats such as Myrtle Rust.

Registrations and abstract submissions will open early 2026.

<https://www.anpc.asn.au/conferences-apcc15/>

NZPCN 2026 Conference – Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington NZ, 12-15 October 2026

The theme is Māhia ngā here - Collaboration for better conservation. This theme celebrates the power of working together, reflecting on past and present collaborations in plant conservation, and exploring how we can strengthen these connections for the future.

The 2026 conference coincides with the 100-year anniversary of the Ōtari Native Botanic Garden and Wilton's Bush Reserve. On Monday 12 October, a formal event will commemorate the centenary, marking 100 years to the day since Ōtari was officially opened.

The conference will run from Monday to Thursday, with workshops and a welcome event on Monday, symposia on Tuesday and Wednesday, and field trips on Thursday. Our field trips and workshops will make the most of the beautiful Wellington flora.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/nzpcn/events/2026-nzpcn-conference/>