Plant Cuttings – January 2026

Grassy Plains Management Team: Establishing seed infrastructure for critically endangered grasslands – Society for Ecological Restoration, 22 December 2025

Located in Melbourne, Australia, the Grassy Plains Management Team project focuses on two main sites: Iramoo Wildflower Grassland Reserve in Cairnlea, with an additional site at Bababi Djinanang on Merri Creek in Fawkner. Together, these areas hold some of the last high-quality remnants of the critically endangered Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain.

This ecosystem is among the most at-risk in Australia and is classified as critically endangered under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. Although these grasslands are ecologically and culturally significant, they continue to decline, driven in part by a gap in leadership capacity for establishing Seed Production Areas (SPAs) and a largely underdeveloped commercial native seed industry. The project's restoration activities aim to strengthen and buffer remnant communities, increasing their resilience and long-term survival.

https://www.ser.org/news/716775/Grassy-Plains-Management-Team-Establishing-seed-infrastructure-for-critically-endangered-grasslands.htm

Four titan arum 'corpse flowers' to bloom in a week at Cairns Botanic Gardens – ABC News, 1 January 2026

Four rare titan arums — known as corpse flowers due to their pungent odour — have bloomed within days of each other at the Cairns Botanic Gardens in Far North Queensland, drawing thousands of visitors.

Renowned for their size and stench of its flowers, the plants produce a large burgundy flowering structure known as an inflorescence, which can exceed 3 metres in height and contain clusters of small flowers.

The inflorescence only appears once every few years for about 24 hours, emitting a scent likened to rotting flesh or "bin juice" to attract pollinators.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-01-01/four-titan-arums-simultaneously-flower-in-cairns-botanic-gardens/106190260

Is sustainable forestry certification protecting Australia's bushland? – ABC News, 5 January 2026

When conservationist Stuart Inchley hosts people at his Turtons Creek property, he always invites them to his tree house. Four metres in the air overlooking native temperate rainforest, the tree house thrusts visitors into the canopy of the South Gippsland bushland, and even accommodates a hammock for sleeping amongst the trees.

"We've had nearly 400 people come out to visit," Mr Inchley said. "You get down here, and it's like you step back to Gondwana."

But he fears his tree house and its lush surrounds could be at risk, due to auditing errors with a sustainable timber plantation next door. Mr Inchley's property abuts the Hancock Victorian Plantation's (HVP) Fellas Coupe site near Foster in South Gippsland.

He said he believes the errors mean the company has logged near areas that should have been identified as endangered rainforest, with the flow-on effect potentially damaging wider ecosystems and affecting wildlife corridors on his property.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-01-05/sustainable-timber-certification-concerns/105904122

With thousands of feral horses gone, Kosciuszko's fragile ecosystems are slowly recovering – The Conversation, 5 January 2026

In Kosciuszko National Park in Australia's alpine region, the landscape is slowly changing. Patches of native vegetation cropped bald by horses are regrowing. Some long-eroded creek banks look less compacted along the edges. Visitors come across fewer horses standing on the roads, a real traffic hazard.

In 2023, New South Wales authorised the aerial shooting of feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park. And in late November, the government passed a bill to repeal the law that recognised feral horses as having "heritage status" in the park. This change removed the legal protections on horses in Kosciuszko that had set them apart from other introduced species such as deer, pigs, foxes and rabbits. Now horses will be treated the same way as other invasive species across Australia, restoring consistency to managing their impact on the landscape.

The latest survey estimates around 3,000 horses remain in Kosciuszko National Park, down from roughly 17,000 a year ago. More than 9,000 horses have been culled since 2021. The current management plan is designed to retain 3,000 horses – a compromise between ecological protection and perceived heritage values. It will remain in place until mid-2027.

https://theconversation.com/with-thousands-of-feral-horses-gone-kosciuszkos-fragile-ecosystems-are-slowly-recovering-270658

New species of bush tomato with visible nectar glands discovered in the Australian outback – Phys.org, 5 January 2026

A recent study led by Bucknell University Professor Chris Martine, biology, the David Burpee Professor of Plant Genetics and Research, has identified and described a new species of bush tomato with a special connection to ants—a taxonomic journey sparked by unusual specimens held in Australian herbarium collections.

The study, co-authored by a set of Australian botanists and Jason Cantley—the former Burpee Postdoctoral Fellow in Botany at Bucknell who is now Associate Professor of Biology at San Francisco State University—appears in PhytoKeys and underscores the critical role that natural history collections play in biodiversity science.

The new species, *Solanum nectarifolium* (Tanami bush tomato), was named for the location of its original collection area—the northern edge of the Tanami Desert—and for the uniquely

conspicuous nectar-producing organs on the undersides of its leaves. These extrafloral nectaries exude a sweet liquid to attract ants that might protect the plant from herbivores. This remarkable trait marks the first known Solanum species with extrafloral nectaries visible to the naked eye, a feature previously observed only microscopically in a handful of related Australian species.

https://phys.org/news/2026-01-species-bush-tomato-visible-nectar.html

Yes, forest trees die of old age. But the warming climate is killing them faster – The Conversation, 7 January 2026

Across Australia, forests are quietly changing. Trees that once stood for decades or centuries are now dying at an accelerating rate. And this is not because of fire, storms, or logging. The chronic stress of a warming climate is killing them.

Our new research draws on 83 years of records from more than 2,700 long-term forest plots. This is the most extensive dataset ever assembled of Australia's forests.

For the first time, we traced how background tree mortality – the slow, natural turnover of trees through time – has shifted across an entire continent. The results reveal tree mortality has been climbing steadily for more than 80 years, across all types of forests.

This is not just an Australian story. Similar increases in tree mortality have been recorded in the Amazon, Europe, and North America. Together, these independent observations point to a systemic shift. The planet's forests, once reliable carbon sinks, are losing their capacity to buffer climate change.

https://theconversation.com/yes-forest-trees-die-of-old-age-but-the-warming-climate-is-killing-them-faster-272268

We discovered microbes in bark 'eat' climate gases. This will change the way we think about trees – The Conversation, 9 January 2026

We all know trees are climate heroes. They pull carbon dioxide out of the air, release the oxygen we breathe, and help combat climate change.

Now, for the first time, our research has uncovered the hidden world of the tiny organisms living in the bark of trees. We discovered they are quietly helping to purify the air we breathe and remove greenhouse gases. These microbes "eat", or use, gases like methane and carbon monoxide for energy and survival. Most significantly, they also remove hydrogen, which has a role in super-charging climate change.

What we discovered has changed how we think about trees. Bark was long assumed to be largely biologically inert in relation to climate. But our findings show it hosts active microbial communities that influence key atmospheric gases. This means trees affect the climate in more ways than we previously realised.

https://theconversation.com/we-discovered-microbes-in-bark-eat-climate-gases-this-will-change-the-way-we-think-about-trees-269612

Aussies warned over danger lurking behind common garden plant's 'pretty' flowers – Yahoo News, 12 January 2026

Aussies have been urged to keep an eye out for a common ornamental plant potentially growing on their properties. Its "pretty" exterior is hiding a worrying truth, authorities warn.

While they are rather pleasing to look at, foxgloves "can be harmful to people, pets and the environment", Tasmania's Huon Valley Council alerted residents this week. Recognised for its striking floral displays, the species is a popular choice for gardeners.

However, behind its tall, vibrant flowers lurks a dangerous environmental concern. If they jump the fence and escape backyards, foxgloves pose a serious threat to native species. On top of that, they also contain several components that are highly toxic and poisonous to humans. In particular, they can affect the heart muscle.

https://au.news.yahoo.com/aussies-warned-over-danger-lurking-behind-common-garden-plants-pretty-flowers-190019546.html

Ten Sydney Harbours' worth of threatened species habitat approved for destruction in 2025, report finds – The Guardian, 14 January 2026

More than 57,000 hectares of threatened species habitat was approved for destruction by the Australian government in 2025 – the most in 15 years, according to analysis by the Australian Conservation Foundation.

The ACF's latest annual "extinction wrapped" report has revealed that the threatened species habitat greenlit for land-clearing was about 10 times the size of Sydney Harbour – more than double the 2024 figure, and over five times the 10,426 hectares approved for razing in 2023.

Former Greens leader Adam Bandt, the ACF's new chief executive, described the year-on-year doubling as "really distressing".

"A lot of people don't know that Australia is a global deforestation hotspot … every year, we lose more forest than the loss from the entire palm oil industry in Indonesia," he said. "The nature that we love is under threat like never before."

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/jan/13/threatened-species-habitat-destruction-australia-15-year-high

Replace invasive agapanthus with these 6 Australian native alternatives – Better Homes and Gardens, 14 January 2026

The bright purple, blue and white flowers of agapanthus can be seen far and wide across Australia. While it's definitely a favourite among Aussies, some varieties of agapanthus can spread a bit too easily. But there are plants similar to agapanthus in both appearance and hardiness – and choosing native varieties can also be beneficial for your local environment. So, let's go through some key details about agapanthus, as well as some beautiful native plants you could consider instead.

Agapanthus are technically classified as a weed in Australia, according to the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions Weeds Australia website. Also known as African Lily or Lily of the Nile, agapanthus is originally from South Africa but is commonly used in Australian gardens for its colourful blooms and low effort maintenance. It's a perennial plant with fleshy roots, dark-green foliage and tall spikes of flowers.

https://www.bhg.com.au/garden/gardening/native-alternatives-to-agapanthus/

Native pollinators need more support than honeybees in Australia – here's why – The Conversation, 15 January 2026

Late last year, the New South Wales government announced an additional A$9.5 million in funding to support honeybee keepers in the wake of the 2022 arrival and subsequent spread of the Varroa mite.

Varroa mites attack honeybee larvae, reducing and even destroying entire colonies. This impacts honey production and the crop pollination services provided by honeybees. However, the honeybee is not native to Australia. It's an introduced species that has routinely escaped hives and gone feral, negatively impacting our native animals and biodiversity in general.

The new funding follows $58.4 million already spent by the NSW government in relation to the Varroa mite. It's part of an ongoing trend of millions being spent on this exotic bee and pollination services to exotic crops, while largely neglecting the native plant-pollinator interactions that existed prior to European colonisation.

While some government and non-government funding is starting to look into alternative pollinators, thousands of Australian bee species and other native pollinators don't enjoy nearly the same support as European honeybees. Native biodiversity is on the brink – but there's work we can do to stop this.

https://theconversation.com/native-pollinators-need-more-support-than-honeybees-in-australia-heres-why-273238

Regulator investigates alleged breach of Alcoa's mining exemption conditions – ABC News, 15 January 2026

A single tree threatens to disrupt US mining giant Alcoa's expansion in Western Australia, with the company under investigation over an alleged breach of its state-imposed mining conditions. Alcoa — which has mined bauxite in WA since the 1960s and employs about 4,000 people in the state — wants to expand further into the world's only jarrah forest, south-east of Perth.

The proposal is under review by the state's Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), which would typically require a project to stop while it's being assessed. However, the WA government allowed Alcoa to keep mining during the assessment to "safeguard local jobs".

Alcoa's special exemption comes with conditions, including a requirement that mining must not occur within 10 metres of mature significant trees, which can provide nesting habitats for endangered black cockatoos.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-01-15/dwer-alcoa-investigation-alleged-breach-mining-exemption/106216754

No longer extinct, just critically endangered – UNSW Newsroom, 19 January 2026

It took such a constellation of unlikely events syncing up, it's almost unbelievable it happened at all. Aaron Bean was banding birds on a sprawling outback station in a remote corner of northern Queensland when he spotted a plant that looked interesting.

A professional horticulturalist, Aaron snapped a couple of photos and, when he got back to phone reception, uploaded his finding to the vast citizen scientist database, iNaturalist.

Four million people across the globe have logged almost 300 million observations of more than five hundred thousand species to iNaturalist, making it one of the largest citizen science platforms in the world.

Once online, Aaron's pictures found their way to a different Bean, Anthony Bean, an expert botanist from the Queensland Herbarium who immediately recognised the plant as something very special indeed: a presumed extinct plant not seen since the 1960s that he had described himself ten years earlier.

"It was very serendipitous," says Thomas Mesaglio from the UNSW School of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, who has written about the rediscovery for the Australian Journal of Botany.

https://www.unsw.edu.au/newsroom/news/2026/01/no-longer-extinct-just-critically-endangered

Rare Corrigin grevillea plant makes record-breaking comeback after horror 2023 bushfire in Corrigin Reserve – Narrogin Observer, 20 January 2026

After being almost entirely wiped out in a 2023 bushfire, a rare Australian plant species has been discovered growing back in record numbers in a Wheatbelt reserve.

On October 17, 2023, career and volunteer firefighters, with the help of water bombers, extinguished a large bushfire in the Shire of Corrigin, which had threatened lives and homes. Despite their efforts to prevent major damage to the townsite, the flames razed about 750ha of scrub and crops, including the Corrigin Reserve. The reserve was the only known home of the Corrigin grevillea, also known as *Grevillea scapigera*, where it naturally grew.

One year on from the fire devastation, local Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions volunteer Robin Campbell spotted the first seedlings re-emerge. Then in spring 2025, a survey by the Parks and Wildlife Service conservation team confirmed the finding of 137 healthy and flowering plants, with some producing up to 12 seed pods or flowering twice.

https://www.narroginobserver.com.au/news/narrogin-observer/rare-corrigin-grevillea-plant-makes-record-breaking-comeback-after-horror-2023-bushfire-in-corrigin-reserve-c-21319016

Refining the amazing Kangaroo Paw plant at a Tasmanian farm – ABC Tasmanian Country Hour, 22 January 2026

Angus Stewart is passionate about native plants, but particularly kangaroo paw.

The professional horticulturalist and plant breeder has been working on tougher and easier to look after breeds for the home gardener.

You might have seen his tall and tough variety of kangaroo paw in the nurseries...

Fiona Breen popped into his Tasmanian base, to see what he's working on next

https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/tas-country-hour/angus-stewart/106256126

Changing Australia: Kingsley Dixon on advancing our understanding and conservation of plants – ABC Radio National, 26 January 2026

The need to conserve and restore Australian landscapes is rapidly increasing, with many native species being threatened or disappearing altogether.

If you haven't heard of botanist Kingsley Dixon, you might already know some of his work. He led the team that discovered that smoke - not heat or ash - is responsible for many plants germinating after a bushfire.

This discovery, as well as his work developing Australian seed banks and educating the next generation of botanists, have helped transform our understanding of how plants work.

https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/radionational-breakfast/changing-oz-kingsley-dixon-advancing-plant-understanding-conserv/106260300

Race to save 'zombie tree' as scientists fight to stop living species from dying out – ABC News, 27 January 2026

It is a species named just as it began to disappear. The *Rhodamnia zombi* rainforest tree was identified in 2020, with scientists branding it the "living dead" after a fungal disease stripped it of its ability to grow or reproduce in the wild. That is because the disease, known as myrtle rust, infects the tree's new growth and prevents shoots from maturing, which halts normal development.

Field surveys found some trees had already died, and none of the remaining wild population was producing flowers or fruit. The disease was first detected in Australia in 2010 after arriving from overseas and has since spread widely through native forests.

University of Queensland botanist Professor Rod Fensham said it was a race against time.

"If you can't grow or reproduce, you're pretty doomed, really," he said.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-01-27/fight-to-save-zombie-tree-from-extinction/106269436

5 Australian native plants set to take over gardens in 2026 – Better Homes and Gardens, 20 January 2026

There are many benefits to creating a beautiful garden, but watching plants die in a heatwave isn't one of them.

With hotter summers and increasingly erratic rainfall, Australian gardeners are facing a harsh reality: many traditional garden plants simply can't survive our changing climate.

But there's good news. A new generation of native plants bred specifically to withstand extreme heat and drought is transforming how Australians garden – and they're selling out in days.

https://www.bhg.com.au/garden/new-native-plants/

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/

Beyond Bunya Dieback Symposium - connecting people for country – Maleny QLD, 27 February 2026

The Beyond Bunya Dieback Symposium offers a valuable opportunity to connect with people from across community, conservation, science, culture and land management, to share knowledge, build relationships and explore positive, practical approaches to caring for Country and supporting ecosystem wellbeing.

This dynamic event brings together a diverse line-up of speakers, including Traditional Custodians, researchers, soil pathologists, conservationists, and international presentations.

https://events.humanitix.com/beyond-bunya-dieback-symposium-connecting-people-for-country

Climate Change Alliance of Botanic Gardens (CCABG) Horticulture Forum – Online, 5 March 2026

Conservation Horticulture and Far North Queensland is a free online forum taking place on Thursday, 5 March 2026 1-1:45pm AEDT. The session will feature Lloyd O'Hanlon, Horticulturist and Curator of the Australian Forest Walk at Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, talking about a recent plant collecting trip in far north Queensland, including the rich regional flora, collaboration with Traditional Owners, and how the new specimens might be used in conservation horticulture. A webinar link will be shared with registrants closer to the date.

https://events.humanitix.com/ccabg-horticulture-forum-royal-botanic-gardens-victoria

Snow gum summit 2026 – 14-15 March 2026

Friends of the Earth Melbourne is excited to share that we are organising a second Snow Gum Summit, which will take place in March 2026 on Ngarigo Country in Jindabyne. The Summit will bring people together from across the Australian Alps bioregion spanning Victoria, NSW and the ACT, to address the threats facing these iconic landscapes we all know and love.

https://www.melbournefoe.org.au/snow_gum_summit_2026

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**

24th Australasian Weeds Conference (24AWC) – Christchurch NZ, 23-27 August 2026

On behalf of the Council of Australasian Weed Societies (CAWS), the New Zealand Biosecurity Institute (NZBI) and the New Zealand Plant Protection Society (NZPPS) are excited to host the 24th Australasian Weeds Conference.

Please plan to join us in Christchurch, 23 -27 August 2026, at Te Pae, the city's new convention centre.

https://caws.org.nz/upcoming-awc-2/

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/