

Plant Cuttings – August 2026

Cloning technique could save rare Queen of Sheba flower from extinction – ABC News, 31 July 2026

One of the world's rarest plants, the iconic Western Australian Queen of Sheba orchid, may have been saved from the brink of extinction after conservation scientists made a breakthrough using a cloning technique.

There are fewer than 30 Queen of Sheba orchids left in the wild. They are found near the coast, between Perth and Bunbury in south-western WA.

The conservation status of the critically endangered orchid is so precarious, every known plant is fenced off and under constant CCTV surveillance.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-07-31/queen-of-sheba-flower-breakthrough-cloning-technique-kings-park/106976096>

Its survival relies on idiotic male wasps bonking it – ABC Radio National, 31 July 2026

This flower takes needy to a whole new level!

It was almost extinct. That was, until 2015, when a woman called Julie took it upon herself to make sure we didn't lose the species altogether, and as it happened (baby) Ann Jones went along with a microphone.

Now, it's 10 years on, and Ann is older, greyer and more closely resembles a bearded orchid. But, given she hasn't been made redundant yet, we can revisit the forest to ask – was all that effort worth it? Did the orchids survive?

<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/what-the-duck/orchid-survival-flower-sex/106911698>

Orchids bloom beneath undergrowth in WA's Midwest as wildflower season begins – ABC News, 2 August 2026

While colourful carpets of wildflowers are yet to bloom as regional Western Australia anticipates a bumper season, hidden gems are emerging. Native orchids are tucked away in the green undergrowth.

Geraldton-based nature photographer Bill Belson said the challenge of spotting the elusive blooms was part of what made them special. The 64-year-old said he had been taking photographs since he was a teenager, and his love for nature and images went hand in hand.

Mr Belson said hunting for plants and animals to snap was like "therapy" for him.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-02/orchids-bloom-ahead-of-bumper-wildflower-season/106954736>

What is Australia's most amazing wildflower? Vote now – ABC Science, 5 August 2026

The ABC wants to find Australia's most amazing native wildflower and we need your help.

The flower that gets the most votes in our National Science Week 2026 poll will be added to our impressive "hall of favourites".

Last year, the adorable rakali was crowned Australia's most underrated animal by the ABC audience, joining the majestic river red gum (Australia's favourite tree) and the the warbling magpie (our favourite animal sound).

So what's next?

We're going beyond banksias and waratahs to discover blooms from the unsung understorey.

With the help of experts, we've selected 10 flowering plants from across the country as contenders for the title of Australia's most amazing wildflower.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2026-08-05/science-week-amazing-wildflowers-poll/106612968>

The world's mangrove forests are bouncing back. That's good news for our coasts and climate – The Conversation, 6 August 2026

Mangroves are perplexing plants. They breathe through their roots, appear to stand on stilts and grow best in hot, salty seawater drawn in and out by the tide.

Historically, mangrove forests have been dismissed as inhospitable places to avoid and have been extensively cleared. But these fascinating trees are now gaining attention for how they support biodiversity, store carbon and buffer the effects of storms, cyclones and tsunamis.

Since 1984, scientists have been monitoring the growth and geographical reach of mangrove forests using satellites. And for the first time, these unique ecosystems are expanding at a faster rate than they are declining.

So what's driving this? And could it help curb climate change?

<https://theconversation.com/the-worlds-mangrove-forests-are-bouncing-back-thats-good-news-for-our-coasts-and-climate-288724>

I feel deep sadness about bird flu and environmental loss. Is this normal? – The Conversation, 7 August 2026

Australia's beloved animals are again under threat as the H5N1 strain of bird flu spreads, with more mass deaths expected. Scientists are bracing for another wave of ecological loss and are particularly concerned about rare and threatened species. It's normal to find this news overwhelming, especially in the wake of a growing list of environmental disasters: from algal blooms to coral bleaching, and floods and fires that devastate wildlife and ecosystems.

We research ecological grief – the deep sadness people feel about the loss of nature – and climate emotions – human feelings in response to the climate crisis. We have listened to hundreds of people talk about their feelings about our environment, and their fears and

hopes for its future. Some describe sadness, anger or concern. Others try to avoid bad news.

These responses are rarely simple. They are often rooted in particular places and species we love, and in the memories, identities and relationships attached to them. Because of this, grief can co-exist with feelings like awe, pride, belonging and care.

<https://theconversation.com/i-feel-deep-sadness-about-bird-flu-and-environmental-loss-is-this-normal-289145>

Australia's 'woody meadows' raise biodiversity in cities – ABC News, 7 August 2026

Every few years, Greater Dandenong Council gets calls and emails asking them why they've destroyed a popular public garden bed.

"We definitely get some feedback from people who are very surprised, shocked, dismayed even, that we 'killed' the garden," says Patrick Calazy, the environmental engagement team leader at the Greater Dandenong City Council.

While most parks and public spaces around Australia may sport turf, or a handful of small, drought-tolerant species, this garden in Dandenong is now part of thousands of square metres of public land boasting a colourful array of native flowers. It's what's known as a woody meadow — a planting method using tightly-packed native plants that mimics colourful Australian shrublands.

And luckily for the residents, this brutal cut back, is part of what makes these meadows thrive.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2026-08-07/woody-meadows-native-plants-council/106034578>

Australia has pledged to restore nature. But could we ever bring back lost ecosystems? – The Conversation, 7 August 2026

Nature is not doing well in Australia. Many unique mammals, birds and insects are struggling. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. In response, the federal government signed a global pledge in 2022 to protect and restore nature. The global goal is to restore 30% of degraded ecosystems. But Australia only proposes to have "priority degraded areas [...] under effective restoration by 2030". The terms are not defined, no 30% target is included, and there is no method proposed to measure success.

With 2030 less than four years away, it's time to ask hard questions. What does it actually mean to restore nature? What would success look like? And what would it cost?

<https://theconversation.com/australia-has-pledged-to-restore-nature-but-could-we-ever-bring-back-lost-ecosystems-286141>

The race to save Australia's rare rosella spider orchid – ABC News, 9 August 2026

In a small green shed about an hour out of Melbourne, dozens of pot plants sit on a white plastic table, awaiting their turn to be measured. A thick hairy leaf or two juts out from each pot, and occasionally, a thin stem carries a purple orchid flower with spindly petals pushing up towards the sky.

The cold morning dampens the orchid's scent, but as the day heats up, the shed starts to smell a little musky as the flowers do their best to attract a pollinator.

With freezing fingers, volunteers unceremoniously tip the content of pots out onto the table and rummage through the dirt — hunting for the large root-like tubers of one of Australia's rarest wild orchids.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2026-08-09/rare-rosella-spider-orchid-planting-day/106961778>

Fire is a friend and foe for Australian wildflowers. Climate change is shifting the balance – ABC News, 12 August 2026

Crouched on the sandy soils of an urban bushland in Perth, ecologist Mark Brundrett points out a herd of green elephant ears. The "ears" are a flush of fleshy little leaves, firmly attached to the ground, belonging to the red beak orchid (*Pyrorchis nigricans*).

The plant's Greek genus name, *Pyrorchis*, translates to "fire orchid". Its red and white flowers appear most often after a bushfire when its seeds can spread on the wind to new areas. But when it goes without fire for a long time, the orchid clones itself — by making several new underground tubers from each leaf annually — with individuals known to spread out some 30 metres wide.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2026-08-12/australian-flowers-love-hate-relationship-with-fire-heating-up/106732114>

Botanical illustrations by women shape our knowledge of Australia's flora – ABC News, 15 August 2026

Stepping into Philippa Nikulinsky's studio feels like a peek inside her mind. From her desk overlooking the garden, to the colourful illustrations adorning the walls and drawers filled with field notes and sketches, the whole space is a culmination of a lifelong appreciation for nature.

The 83-year-old self-taught artist says her love of plants is inspired by having grown up in Kalgoorlie.

"I love the red earth country because I came from a place where it was harsh and dry and dusty, and then every few years there was an absolute miracle of wildflowers."

Nikulinsky uses watercolour paints to create incredibly detailed and accurate depictions of Western Australia's flora. Each artwork captures the curl and bend of leaves, the tiny segments of flowers, and branches that have become sparse over time.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-15/history-of-women-botanical-illustrators/106787474>

Pollen grains reveal Australia's first flowering plants – ABC Radio National, 15 August 2026

Australia is home to around 20,000 flowering plants. But when did the first flowers emerge? Vera Korasidis at the University of Melbourne is a palynologist — a palaeontologist specialising in pollen and spores. She analyses ancient pollen and says the oldest-known pollen has been dated to 125 million years. Pollen grains are coated with an extremely hardy compound allowing them to be preserved in rocks for millions of years.

<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/scienceshow/pollen-grains-reveal-australia-s-first-flowering-plants/107037628>

Memory of late partner prompts annual WA wildflower pilgrimage – ABC News, 16 August 2026

Leonie Aspin travels from New Zealand to Western Australia's Mid West each year as a kaleidoscope of colourful blooms emerges after winter rains. For months, she volunteers as a wildflower tour guide in Morawa, 360 kilometres north-east of Perth, in memory of her late partner, Ray Fraser, a former shearer who died from brain cancer in 2022.

It was Mr Fraser who taught her about wildflowers during long drives around the region.

"[Ray] would sometimes in the morning say, 'Do you want to go hunting for orchids?' and it was just like, 'Yes please,'" Ms Aspin said.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-16/new-zealand-to-wa-midwest-wildflowers-tourism/107030124>

Science quiz: How much do you know about our native flowers? - ABC News, 18 August 2026

The ABC is on the hunt for Australia's most amazing wildflower.

Let's see how much you really know about our beautiful native plants from the unsung understorey.

There's only one way to find out if you'll do better than average...

We're rooting for you!

And so are 10 amazing plants vying for the crown of top flower you can vote for on our poll.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2026-08-18/amazing-flowers-quiz/106759588>

Fungi fans celebrate its recognition as nature's third living kingdom – ABC News, 18 August 2026

Mycelium would not know or care if it was recognised by the Australian Labor Party. Its priority over millions of years has been to work underground in ways that scientists are only beginning to appreciate. But the ALP has a soft spot for mycelium, and all other forms of fungi.

At its recent national conference, federal Environment Minister Murray Watt explicitly recognised fungi as part of Australia's natural environment and biodiversity, separate and equal to flora and fauna.

"Fungi are vital to our ecosystem, and it is crucial that our environmental and biodiversity frameworks reflect this," Senator Watt told the conference.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-18/fungi-living-kingdom-recognition-biology-environment/107029164>

From the coasts to the plains, bird flu could threaten not just birds – but their homes – The Conversation, 18 August 2026

Yesterday, I woke to a cold, damp Canberra morning – and silence. The trees around my home were empty of feathered silhouettes. Even the usual bright-eyed, warble-voiced magpies were absent. The next morning, they were back. I don't know why they went AWOL. But their absence felt like a taste of what might come as the lethal H5N1 strain of bird flu spreads in Australia, affecting both birds and mammals.

Conservationists once asked: what is a bird without a tree to nest in?

This year, we may well wonder the grim inverse – what is a tree without a bird to nest in it? I can tell you. A tree without a bird is a miserable thing – and in a broader ecological sense, a tree without a bird could be in trouble.

In Australia, birds act in many roles that mammals or insects might fill elsewhere, from pollinating flowers to spreading seeds to keeping trees free of sap-sucking insects. Bird flu doesn't just threaten birds and mammals – it could well affect entire ecosystems.

<https://theconversation.com/from-the-coasts-to-the-plains-bird-flu-could-threaten-not-just-birds-but-their-homes-289709>

Flannel flower rises from fire to win Australia's heart – ABC News, 22 August 2026

With soft woolly (and sometimes feathery) star-shaped flowers and grey-green foliage, the flannel flower is a well-known wildflower. But this beautiful flower has a few superpowers up its floral sleeve.

Out of a group of 10 incredible native flowering plants, the flannel flower has been crowned Australia's most amazing wildflower for National Science Week 2026.

The flannel flower might look a daisy but it's actually in the Apiaceae family, which includes carrots, celery, parsley, fennel, coriander and cumin. It even has a carrot smell when it is cut.

While most of us are familiar with the beautiful east coast flannel flower *Actinotus helianthi* — you'll find it in florists and nurseries — there are actually 14 species found in Australia, and one in New Zealand. The two most common species in Western Australia are *Actinotus leucocephalus* with creamy white flower heads; and *Actinotus superbus*, known for its prominent, showy white flowers.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2026-08-22/flannel-flower-australias-most-amazing-wildflower/107053414>

Scrutiny over WA government's decision to 'eco-thin' landmark South West forests – ABC News, 25 August 2026

Deep in Western Australia's South West, an ecological experiment is being carried out across swathes of state forests and timber reserves.

"Ecological thinning" involves removing smaller trees, with the goal of allowing those remaining to flourish. The eventual goal is a return to the old-growth forests of the past.

But as logging trucks continue to stream up the region's highways, the practice is facing scrutiny from locals and independent scientists. They are questioning whether eco-thinning is just native logging under another name.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-25/ecological-thinning-experiment-wa-native-logging/107071374>

Invasive Species Council calls for popular 'sweetpea' sold at Bunnings to be declared a weed – ABC News, 29 August 2026

These pretty, purple flowers with a deceptively pleasant name are becoming a problem in Australia.

Polygala, sold under innocent-sounding labels as "sweet pea", "Bellerine pea" and "parrot bush", is overtaking large tracts of Australia's coastline.

That has prompted the Invasive Species Council to nominate *Polygala myrtifolia* (also known as myrtle-leaf milkwort) as one of Australia's most significant weeds, even as potted examples continue to line shelves in retail stores. Polygala is routinely sold at Bunnings and other retail chains.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-29/bunnings-sweet-pea-polygala-milkwort-shrub-infests-coastline/107075598>

Queensland Wattle Association pushes for Brisbane to bloom green and gold at 2032 Olympics – ABC News, 31 August 2026

There's green, and then there's gold. Now, a Queensland group wants to see plenty of both when the world arrives for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Queensland Wattle Association is proposing Project Brisbane Gold, an initiative to plant thousands of native wattles across Queensland, particularly in the south-east, in the years leading up to the Games. The hope is they will eventually flower throughout parks, roadsides and areas surrounding major Games precincts.

"I want to see Brisbane and south-east Queensland bathed in green and gold," Queensland Wattle Association president Mike Gilmour said. The Brisbane Golden Wattle, *Acacia*

fimbriata, typically blooms from mid-July to mid-August, meaning it will coincide with the 2032 Games.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-31/qld-brisbane-olympics-wattle-planting/107086556>

SA Premier defends MotoGP tree removals with almost 400 now slated for chop – ABC News, 31 August 2026

SA Premier Peter Malinaukas has rejected claims he misled the public over the number of trees to be felled in Adelaide's east parklands to make way for a new city motorsport track.

Plans for the 4.13-kilometre circuit were released by the state government on Sunday, and will require new track to be laid in Victoria Park, cutting through the parklands between Wakefield Road and Rundle Road.

The project means 400 trees will be removed, including 42 significant trees and follows almost 600 trees being removed to make way for the North Adelaide Golf Course redevelopment.

Opposition Leader Ashton Hurn said while the Liberals supported the government securing the MotoGP event, it was concerned about transparency before the state election.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-31/premier-defends-tree-removals-amid-suggestion-of-deception/107097172>

Events and Opportunities

12th Australian Stream Management Conference (12ASM) – Kingscliff NSW, 6-9 September 2026

The theme of 12ASM will be “Living and evolving with change”, recognising the development and maturing of the stream management industry and science that supports it, particularly since the first ASM conference, and how we consider living rivers. We look forward to 12ASM bringing together our peers for a collaborative forum of discussion and debate on new and emerging issues, practical challenges encountered, experimental research findings, emerging trends and recent innovations.

<https://12asm.org/>

DIG Conference 2026 – Perth WA, 8-9 September 2026

This year's Dieback Information Group Conference (DIG 2026) marks the 30th Anniversary of the Dieback Working Group, celebrating a whopping three decades of leadership in Phytophthora Dieback management.

DIG brings together researchers, land managers, government agencies, Traditional Custodians, industry leaders and community champions from across Australia and beyond to share knowledge, inspire action and strengthen our collective response to phytophthora dieback and other environmental biosecurity threats.

<https://www.dwg.org.au/dig-conference-2026/>

Nature-Climate Action: Our Opportunity to Lead (2026 ALCA Conference) – Nipaluna/Hobart TAS, 6-9 October 2026

Australia's biggest land conservation event.

As one of Australia's most significant events for the land conservation sector, this annual gathering is where the critical conversations, partnerships and ideas driving nature action come together.

The 2026 ALCA Conference will bring over 400 delegates together – conservation changemakers and practitioners, First Nations leaders and land managers, policymakers, researchers, business, finance and industry experts, landholders and community representatives – all working to drive collective impacts for nature, people and planet.

<https://www.alca.org.au/events/conference/2026>

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/>

Territory NRM Conference – Darwin NT, 17-19 November 2026

The Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) Conference is the Northern Territory's leading event focused on natural resource management. It showcases leading expertise, on-ground initiatives, and community-driven solutions from across the NT.

Over three dynamic days, the conference offers valuable professional development and networking opportunities. Attendees can participate in tailored workshops, engage with a wide range of insightful presentations, explore poster displays, and interact with innovative exhibitions.

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

ESA 2026: Conference of the Ecological Society of Australia – Brisbane QLD, 29 November-4 December 2026

ESA2026 will deliver a dynamic and engaging program showcasing the latest ecological research, innovation and practice from across Australia and the broader ecological community.

The conference program will feature a range of presentation formats, including poster presentations, five-minute speed talks and 15-minute oral presentations, providing opportunities for delegates at all career stages to share ideas, research findings and practical insights.

In addition to the scientific program, ESA2026 will offer a diverse range of workshops, field trips, networking opportunities and social events designed to foster collaboration, professional development and meaningful connections across the ecological community.

Key dates for your calendar:

- Early Bird registration closes: 25 August 2026
- Conference Travel Grants close 31 August 2026

<https://esa2026.org.au/>

Island Arks Symposium IX: Ridge to Reef: Sustaining Biodiversity, Culture and Connection – Norfolk Island, 30 November-2 December 2026

Norfolk Island National Park, together with the Norfolk Island Flora & Fauna Society and the Australian Island Alliance, is honoured to host the Island Arks Symposium IX on Norfolk Island.

The Island Arks Symposia are held biennially to foster collaboration among practitioners and custodians dedicated to protecting island ecosystems across Australia and beyond. They bring together land managers, scientists, First Nations Peoples, and policymakers to discuss, deliberate, and shape responses to critical issues affecting conservation and sustainable development. Through open knowledge exchange and partnership building, the symposia strengthen networks, build shared strategies, and drive tangible conservation outcomes across island landscapes.

<https://kaigi-islandarkssymposiumix.eventsair.site/>