

Plant Cuttings – September 2026

Despite years of rain, Blue Mountains forests still haven't recovered from the Black Summer megafires – The Conversation, 2 September 2026

For three years before the Black Summer megafires of 2019–20, cool season rainfall in southeastern Australia was only half that of normal. When fires broke out, intensely dry conditions helped them spread through areas typically resistant to burning, such as wetlands and rainforests.

After the fires came three years of above-average rainfall, and scientific reports charted rapid vegetation regrowth.

It's easy to think the rains let nature repair itself. But is that the full story? In our new research, we looked at what happened to seven severely burnt plant communities in the Greater Blue Mountains, west of Sydney.

We found a mixed picture. Wet sclerophyll forests supporting tall eucalypts skirted by ferns recovered within five years. But Blue Mountains rainforests did not recover from burns of any severity. Nor did grassy woodlands.

<https://theconversation.com/despite-years-of-rain-blue-mountains-forests-still-havent-recovered-from-the-black-summer-megafires-290432>

Buffel grass raises SA's fire risk but not everyone wants it eradicated – ABC News, 3 September 2026

Parts of South Australia are facing a heightened bushfire risk this spring after the boom of one of the nation's most invasive and flammable weeds. But there is division about what to do about it.

SA has begun a parliamentary inquiry into the management of buffel grass, which has exploded in growth this year due to significant rain in the state's remote north-west. It comes as the Australian and New Zealand Council for Fire and Emergency Services' national bushfire outlook for spring predicts a heightened risk of fire in that district.

The Country Fire Service says high fuel loads fed by an explosion of buffel grass growth are a "particular concern" heading into warmer months.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-03/inquiry-as-buffel-grass-raises-fire-risk-spring-south-australia/107103462>

Bird flu threatens to divert resources away from shot-hole borer – ABC News, 7 September 2026

It was only a couple of years ago when everyone was talking about a tiny but deadly invasive beetle that could wipe out Perth's tree canopy and wreak havoc in agriculture and native forests.

People were on high alert for signs of the polyphagous shot-hole borer and distressed when beautiful big trees in Kings Park and Hyde Park had to be chopped down to stop the spread.

A quarantine zone was placed around the metropolitan area as part of a national response to the pest, and when eradication failed, the response shifted to a long-term management plan.

But now it seems to have gone quiet. In fact, it is more that another deadly biosecurity threat has grabbed our attention, the H5N1 bird flu.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-07/shot-hole-borer-still-poses-risk-despite-bird-flu-focus/107120044>

A court will decide the future of Yuraygir's feral horses. That matters for native plants and animals – The Conversation, 8 September 2026

From poems to films and books of history, horses feature widely in Australian popular culture.

Feral horses, also known as brumbies, are descendants of domesticated horses that now live and breed independently in the wild. For some people, these horses are a cherished part of Australia's cultural heritage. For others, they represent a major threat to the environments they inhabit.

Yuraygir National Park, on the coast of northern New South Wales on Yaegl and Gumbaynggirr Country, is a stunning landscape where you can see coastal emus and spot migrating whales from the shore.

It is also home to a small feral horse population that is now at the centre of a legal dispute. The final hearing, taking place on Wednesday, could have repercussions far beyond feral horses.

<https://theconversation.com/a-court-will-decide-the-future-of-yuraygirs-feral-horses-that-matters-for-native-plants-and-animals-290522>

Best wet season in decades gives life to Barkindji people's living medicine cabinet – ABC News, 12 September 2026

To most travellers passing through Menindee, the bushland along the Darling-Baaka River is a striking outback landscape, abundant with wildflowers and greenery. But where others see a stretch of native scrub, Barkindji and Malyangapa man Dave Doyle sees something more valuable — a living medicine cabinet, teeming with plants whose healing properties have been used by his family for generations.

There's emu bush, which can help with wounds and headaches; native lemongrass to soothe a sore throat, and river mint, which makes for a soothing tea and helps with digestion.

A particularly wet season in Far West New South Wales has seen flora in the region flourish in numbers not seen for decades, according to Mr Doyle.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-12/preserving-barkindji-knowledge-through-edible-medicinal-plants/107115718>

This wildflower paradise is only open six weeks a year. As soon as I entered, my mind started to calm – The Guardian, 12 September 2026

On a cloudy spring morning, a group of 20 nature enthusiasts gather at the entrance to a nature park on the northern edge of Sydney. “Good to see nobody is wearing thongs,” our volunteer tour leader, Helen Logie, says to chuckles.

We are among just under 5,000 people lucky enough to visit Muogamarra nature reserve during the six weeks a year it is open to the public, coinciding with wildflower season. This year, tickets – which provide access to a limited number of guided and self-directed walks – sold out in less than a week.

On the windy drive in, cars slowed to marvel at waratahs, now in full bloom – one of the threatened species that people flock here year after year to witness.

The fully native nature reserve, encompassing 2,300 hectares on the edge of the Hawkesbury River, has been protected for almost a century and inhabited by traditional owners for at least 20,000 years. Its fragile ecosystem and Aboriginal cultural heritage cuts it off to public access for most of the year, providing a unique experience.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/sep/12/muogamarra-nature-reserve-nsw-only-open-six-weeks-a-year-native-wildflowers>

Massive mullet created from 'obnoxious' weed and plastic litter for SWELL Sculpture Festival – ABC News, 12 September 2026

In a suburban garage on the southern Gold Coast, two longtime friends created a supersized fish that is now pride of place at one of Australia's largest outdoor sculpture exhibitions.

It started life relatively small, with the idea of sculpting a piece made entirely of red-nosed, fish-shaped soy sauce packets. But like so many projects, its scale soon got much bigger.

"We didn't quite think it would be here," said Ged McCormick, who sacrificed half a parking space at his Palm Beach home to bring the sculpture to life.

"We were tossing up doing it at my work or at Rusty's place, but this is just where everything started ... and it keeps the neighbourhood entertained."

The concept began as an Indigenous fish trap woven from invasive plants, which the pair planned to fill with fishing line and plastic litter collected from nearby beaches.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-12/invasive-weed-mullet-sculpture-swell-festival/107123706>

Mad about trees – ABC News, 13 September 2026

Nick Rogers was working from home when it happened. Outside his window, several hard-hatted men appeared at the base of a robust red flowering gum. “I thought, well, they’re just doing the annual trim,” says Rogers, a middle-aged architect from Melbourne. “Then they began to chop down the entire tree.”

At some point, Rogers, outraged about the destruction of a tree that had watched over his street for decades, stood up from his desk, joined the men wielding chainsaws on the nature strip and tried to act casual. He wanted to know who had sent them. By the time they had downed tools, an activist was born.

The story Rogers tells goes like this: he discovered the local council was suddenly enforcing a policy that he claims no one knew they had — removing established, healthy street trees to ensure roads are free of overhanging branches below 4.5 metres from “curb to curb” rather than just the centre of the road. Now standing in council’s way is a plucky group of residents led by Rogers who possesses the ability to build a sassy website and organise. They’re demanding consultation and a policy rethink to save what they consider their suburb’s greatest asset: its trees.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-13/housing-crisis-trees-collateral-damage/107137146>

How bush regeneration helped to restore my faith in the world – ABC News, 14 September 2026

As a kid, I had a pretty clear idea of what was in store for us in 2026: world peace, flying cars, a fully restored Amazon rainforest and teleportation. Even in the mid-90s as an anxious 11-year-old, climate change, inequality and war after war led me to hope for a world that would look very different by now. Captain Planet was our hero, after all.

Of course, my predictions did not eventuate. Sometimes I still feel like the powerless and anxious child I once was. So I spent the best part of two decades working in health and community services. While it took me to interesting places and introduced me to some extraordinary people, I left that chapter of my life as a sad husk and I felt like my capacity for empathy had all but dried up. I’d come to a dead patch in my career. I was running an accommodation business in the hills behind Byron Bay but it had become frustratingly repetitive.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-14/perspective-bush-regeneration-healed-me/106868924>

Blankets of colour: Western Australia’s wildflower season bursts into life – in pictures – The Guardian, 14 September 2026

On Wajarri Yamaji country in WA’s remote mid-west sits Inyarrimanha Ilgari Bundara, the CSIRO’s Murchison radio-astronomy observatory. This year’s early winter rains have left the telescopes surrounded by a carpet of splendid native blooms.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/gallery/2026/sep/14/western-australia-wildflower-season-bursts-to-life-in-pictures>

Can 'plant IVF' save an endangered shrub? These scientists are on a mission to find out – ABC Science, 19 September 2026

It's early spring, and a patch of endangered shrubs in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales has started to bloom. Crouching among the plants is a group of scientists on a delicate mission. Armed with tweezers, the scientists "emasculate" tiny pink and white flowers by removing the male reproductive organ called an anther. They're after specks of pollen to hand-pollinate plants that are struggling to reproduce. Essentially, they're collecting sperm in the hope of performing the plant equivalent of artificial insemination.

Zieria covenyi blooms from September to December. It has only two known populations in the world, both in the Blue Mountains National Park. While the shrub is at risk from climate change, fertility issues are another major threat to its survival. *Zieria covenyi* flowers have both male and female parts: the orange-coloured male anther holds pollen, and the female stigma at the centre receives pollen carried from other flowers by pollinators.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2026-09-19/endangered-sterile-plant-hand-pollination-fertility/107029044>

Rainfall brings 'super bloom' of Sturt's desert pea to outback SA – ABC News, 20 September 2026

A perfect storm of weather conditions has seen South Australia's north erupt into a sea of colour with a super bloom of Sturt's desert peas.

"We're looking at three or four times the average [rain totals for the region]," Flinders and Outback Parks and Wildlife manager, Phillip Strachan, said.

He said the wildflowers had arrived early and were continuing to bloom en masse about the Flinders Ranges — the most rain they had seen in the area since 1974.

"It's like something out of Scotland. It's phenomenal," Mr Strachan said.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-20/rain-brings-sturt-desert-pea-super-bloom-in-outback-sa/107157150>

'Premier's STEM Researcher of the Year' among those set to lose jobs in Tasmanian cost cutting – ABC News, 24 September 2026

Scientific roles are among those that have been hit by Tasmania's public sector job losses, prompting warnings that the cuts are not strategic.

The ABC understands around half of the team at the Tasmanian Herbarium have been told they will lose their jobs, including the director, internationally acclaimed lichen researcher Dr Gintaras Kantvilas.

Dr Kantvilas won the Premier's STEM Researcher of the Year Award last year. He has named more than 400 species of lichen in his career, and had several more named in his honour.

The Tasmanian Herbarium holds more than 312,000 preserved plant specimens and is responsible for developing, maintaining and managing Tasmania's official botanical collections.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-24/stem-researcher-gintaras-kantvilas-sacked-by-rockliff-govt/107188650>

Central Queensland fossilised fruits discovery changes understanding of plant evolutionary history – ABC News, 28 August 2026

When scientists were first handed exceptionally preserved fossils from rural central Queensland, they were stumped.

"It was an unusual discovery because when we first found it, it looked a bit like lizard skin," Queensland Museum's principal geoscience scientist, Andrew Rozefelds, said.

"I just went, 'It can't be', because when you get plants, you don't tend to get vertebrates as well.

"We were faced with a plant we've never seen before."

The plants were later identified as the first fossil record of the Melastomataceae family in Australia or eastern Gondwana, an ancient supercontinent. It also led to the discovery of a new genus and species, *Capella raulingsii*, which was previously unknown to science. Melastomataceae are now found around the tropics, with several species in Australia, mostly in the tropical north and east.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-08-28/fossil-fruits-capella-changes-plant-evolutionary-history/107084710>

Bush landscape transformed into 'once-in-a-lifetime' flower experience – ABC News, 25 September 2026

Belinda Hansen lives on a remote 1922 homestead by the River Murray, on the border of New South Wales and Victoria.

It sits about 50 kilometres from Lake Victoria, surrounded by ancient red cliffs, gum trees and wildlife.

According to Ms Hansen, this year's abundance of flora is reminiscent of sights she saw more than 50 years ago, in 1974, with the return of plants she has not seen in decades.

"That was an amazing year for rain, plants and budgies — there were thousands of them," she said.

"Normally plants are isolated, taking advantage of a patch of ground which is sheltered [or] containing more moisture than surrounding areas.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-09-25/native-flowers-bloom-with-winter-rainfall-south-australia/107059748>

Events and Opportunities

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/>

SERA (Society for Ecological Restoration) Conference 2026 – Adelaide SA, 19-21 October 2026

We're thrilled to invite you to Adelaide in October 2026 for a week celebrating your innovation, collaboration and leadership shaping ecological restoration across Australasia.

Our theme, Connected Restoration, Inspired Action, captures the spirit of this moment in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. It speaks to the strength we find in connection across disciplines, communities, cultures and landscapes and to the power of shared knowledge in turning vision into action. As we look ahead to the next four years, this theme calls us to unite with purpose, amplify one another's efforts, and accelerate the collective momentum needed to restore ecosystems across our region.

The SERA conference will also highlight the important role we all play in our nations' contributions to the Global Biodiversity Framework's ambitious restoration targets. It is an opportunity to connect with other restoration practitioners and advocates, share ideas and experiences, and strengthen our collective efforts to accelerate meaningful restoration.

<https://icebergevents-sera-2026.eventsairsite.com/>

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.

<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/>