

Plant Cuttings – January 2025

Reforms to Australia's illegal logging laws

The updated Illegal Logging Prohibition Amendment Act 2024 (Amendment Act) and new Illegal Logging Prohibition Rules 2024 will come into effect on 3 March 2025.

The reformed laws change due diligence requirements for importers and processors of regulated timber products. These changes will directly impact how you assess and verify the legality of timber and timber products. It is essential to begin preparing for these updates to ensure continued compliance.

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/forestry/policies/illegal-logging>

Sheep farmers are helping save Tasmania's native grasslands: 'We're better off working together' – The Guardian, 22 December 2024

Critically endangered grasslands in Tasmania's Midlands were being destroyed by agriculture, but an innovative partnership has protected the remaining ecosystem – and local farmers' profits

When Tasmania's lowland native grasslands were first recommended for national listing as a critically endangered ecosystem in 2007, mistrust between farmers and conservationists was high.

"We walked out of a stakeholder meeting in the Ross pub," says Simon Foster, whose family have been farming on the Midlands since 1823. Four years later, Foster and a small group of other local farmers had come around.

"We're better off working together than taking an adversarial approach," Foster said.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/dec/22/sheep-farmers-are-helping-save-tasmanias-native-grasslands-were-better-off-working-together>

Volunteers preserving plants at Australian National Botanic Gardens by squishing one bug at a time – ABC News, 27 December 2024

As far as volunteer jobs go, this would have to be one of the more unusual.

For about two hours every week, the Squishy Vols, as they're known, meet for some meditative manual labour to squish bugs and scrape scale from plants in the glasshouses at the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) in Canberra.

This dedicated team of volunteers has the unique role of looking after Australia's tropical plant life by tackling one of the most persistent challenges in horticulture: pest control. Their essential work helps maintain the health of the gardens' rare and delicate plant collection without the use of chemicals.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-12-27/act-bug-squishing-volunteers-doing-invaluable-work/104677216>

In Australia, it's 'easier to get a permit to destroy nature' than fix it. Here's why – ABC News, 31 December 2025

Experts say this is a systemic problem with Australia's environmental laws. Justine Bell-James, an associate professor of law at the University of Queensland, said from a regulatory point of view, destroying nature was "less complicated".

Dr Bell-James said that's because the existing laws were created to protect nature from excessive harm, not to improve nature.

"When people want to do restoration, in the eyes of the law, it's just another kind of interference with the environment. So for that reason, restoration practitioners have to go and apply for the same sorts of permits that a developer does or that a mining company does," she said.

"It's like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole."

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-12-31/environment-nature-destruction-permit-waterways-conservation/104729768>

'Heck of a light show': spectacular bloom of bioluminescence returns to Tasmania's coastline – The Guardian, 1 January 2025

Masses of glittering algae have returned to Tasmania's coastline in a spectacular bloom of bioluminescence that experts say is the largest seen in years.

The phenomenon, known as "sea sparkles" or "red tide", was caused by masses of noctiluca scintillans, a pink-coloured algae that experts say was beautiful to look at, but considered bad news for the environment.

Dr Lisa-ann Gershwin, a scientist and writer who runs tours of Tasmania's naturally glowing flora and fauna, said the current algal bloom throughout Storm Bay, south-east of Hobart, was on a "truly epic" scale.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jan/01/bioluminescence-bloom-tasmania-australia-algae-blue-lights>

Mining state moves to become 'conservation superpower' – Yahoo News, 2 January 2025

Its economy is powered by mining but Western Australia is laying claim to being a "conservation superpower" with the expansion of national parks.

An additional 6.5 million hectares of land and water has been protected since 2019, surpassing a state government target, Environment Minister Reece Whitby says. The state Labor government had aimed to protect five million hectares through national parks, marine parks and nature reserves over five years.

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/mining-state-moves-become-conservation-063408371.html>

Fully recovering Australia's threatened species would cost 25% of GDP. We can't do it all at once – so let's start here – The Conversation, 7 January 2025

Australia has already lost at least 100 species since European colonisation. Across land and freshwater habitats, 1,657 species are currently threatened with the same fate. Their populations have fallen 2-3% every year over the last quarter century. The accelerating loss of species is one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time. Losing biodiversity threatens cultural values, economic stability and society's wellbeing.

Like many nations, Australia has pledged to stem these losses. We have signed international commitments to restore nature and halt species extinctions. These are noble and necessary goals. But at present, we lack an understanding of the sheer size, range of options – and expense of the challenge.

In our new research, we estimate the costs of bringing Australia's threatened species back to their potential ranges. Rather than being limited by current spend on conservation, we calculated what it would cost to fully recover Australia's threatened species across their viable range.

<https://theconversation.com/fully-recovering-australias-threatened-species-would-cost-25-of-gdp-we-cant-do-it-all-at-once-so-lets-start-here-245669>

New orchid “like a cupcake” – CSIRO News, 8 January 2025

Imagine discovering a tiny orchid perched on a tree branch in a forest. It resembles an orchid you've seen before, but something is subtly different. Could it be a new species that hasn't yet been named or described by science?

How would you find out?

<https://www.csiro.au/en/news/All/Articles/2025/January/new-norfolk-island-orchid>

Upper Snowy Landcare Network tackles conservation with state-of-the-art technology – About Regional, 16 January 2025

Upper Snowy Landcare Network has two conservation projects underway that use cutting-edge technologies. The first uses a new wood/tree boring technology to fast-track the 100-year process of forming the hollows that wildlife need to breed. The second project uses an app to augment recent tree planting with under-storey plants that closely replicate what would have normally occurred prior to clearing.

Snowy Hydro is funding both projects. Work began in June 2024 and the funding must be acquitted by June 2025. Over the past 20 years a 2000-sqkm area in the Snowy Monaro Regional Council area has lost a huge amount of healthy large- and medium-sized ribbon gums.

<https://aboutregional.com.au/upper-snowy-landcare-network-tackles-conservation-with-state-of-the-art-technology/468645/>

Repairing a landscape – ABC News, 18 January 2025

Wedgetail is a private company investing in projects around the world that restore ecologically valuable areas. It was founded by Lisa Miller, who purchased the Quoin in 2021. A zoologist by training, Ms Miller said the property contained a variety of different ecosystems.

“The Quoin is a patchwork landscape of areas that are in relatively good condition, and areas that have been quite degraded,” she said.

Many threatened plant and animal species call the Quoin home, but so do feral deer and introduced grasses that prevent the native species from thriving. Restoring the property is a challenging and costly task, made possible by an incredibly successful business venture.

Ms Miller is married to billionaire Cameron Adams, the co-founder of Canva — a popular online graphic design tool. According to Forbes Magazine, he’s Australia’s 25th richest person. The couple is investing much of their fortune in conservation.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-18/can-landscape-regeneration-be-profitable-quoin-tas/104687798>

Forty-one new flora and fauna species added to Australia’s threatened list – ABC News, 21 January 2025

The number of Australian animals, plants and unique ecological communities officially recognised as being in danger of extinction rose to 2,142 last year.

Australia has one of the world's highest rates of extinctions with about 100 species of flora and fauna lost since European colonisation.

There were 42 new additions to the national list of threatened species, including 21 animals, 20 plants and one threatened ecological community — the King Island scrub complex.

Each species has been given one of the three highest ratings on the threatened status scale (vulnerable, endangered or, the most precarious rating, critically endangered).

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2025-01-21/what-made-it-onto-australias-threatened-species-list-2024/104830434>

The red flowering gum: a perennial favourite and a summer stunner – The Conversation, 21 January 2025

If you’ve been on a summertime stroll in recent weeks, chances are you’ve seen a red flowering gum, *Corymbia ficifolia*.

This species comes from a small area of south west Western Australia but has been a perennial favourite with Australian gardeners for well over a century. It’s often planted in domestic gardens, streets and parks, demonstrating its versatility and appeal.

But while its large brilliant flowers attracted early horticultural attention, this summertime stunner’s path to being a successful urban tree has not always been easy.

<https://theconversation.com/the-red-flowering-gum-a-perennial-favourite-and-a-summer-stunner-246485>

Big, stinky corpse flower *Putricia* blooms in Sydney, watched on by thousands via livestream – ABC News, 23 January 2025

A giant stinky flower drawing attention across Sydney has officially bloomed, emitting its infamous foul odour of decay for 24 hours only. *Putricia*, as the corpse flower has been nicknamed, blossomed at the Royal Botanic Garden on Thursday afternoon after first showing signs about a week and a half ago.

Otherwise known as the Bunga Bangkai, Titan Arum or *Amorphophallus titanum*, the plant has the biggest, smelliest flower spike in the world and only flowers once every few years. Corpse flowers are rare and endangered and usually found in the West Sumatran rainforests, with estimates that there are less than 1,000 specimens left in the wild.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-23/nsw-sydney-botanic-gardens-putricia-corpse-flower-blooms/104841968>

We live in times of multiple entwined crises – but our policy responses aren't keeping up – The Conversation, 24 January 2025

Existing policies to tackle environmental challenges fail to take into account that biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution are intertwined crises and produce compounding and intensifying impacts. Policy measures taken in isolation are likely to result in unintended consequences.

These are key findings of two major assessment reports by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) released late last year.

One report lays out a framework for transformative change. The other, known as the Nexus assessment, highlights links between biodiversity loss, water quality, food security, health risks and climate change. The reports argue that transformative change is urgent and necessary, but also feasible, to achieve a just and sustainable world. They encourage weaving Indigenous knowledge with science to promote a more comprehensive and connected approach and to limit unintended consequences.

<https://theconversation.com/we-live-in-times-of-multiple-entwined-crises-but-our-policy-responses-arent-keeping-up-247180>

Calls for end to logging in NSW state forests assessed for the Great Koala National Park – ABC News, 24 January 2025

Meredith Stanton has an undeniable love for the forests within her local community. But with this appreciation comes concerns for the prosperity of these green spaces amid risks of deforestation. The long-time conservationist has resided next to Clouds Creek State Forest on the NSW Mid North Coast for more than 40 years.

While logging in Clouds Creek was suspended early last year, Ms Stanton has watched operations continue in nearby forests such as Sheas Nob State Forest. Clouds Creek and Sheas Nob are among multiple state forests in the region earmarked for the Great Koala National Park.

The park, which will provide a conservation reserve for prime koala habitat, was a commitment NSW Premier Chris Minns took to the 2023 state election. However, ecologists have expressed frustration over the slow progress and the continuation of logging by Forestry Corporation.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-24/nsw-logging-state-forest-great-koala-national-park/104821426>

'Ineradicable' harrisia cactus spreads, killing animals and hurting people – ABC News, 26 January 2025

Many people may not be familiar with the harrisia cactus, but Ken Stower knows the pain its razor-sharp spines inflict all too well. He was forced to euthanise his prized \$20,000 bull after it stepped on the cactus and the thorns punctured its leg.

"The spines are quite capable of going through a [four-wheel drive] tyre and if they can go through that they will quite easily go through an animal," Mr Stower said.

Over the past decade he has watched the invasive weed spread across his 1,400-hectare property at Captains Mountain, 220 kilometres west of Brisbane.

"It's gone from hundreds to thousands of plants everywhere," Mr Stower said.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2025-01-26/harrisia-cactus-continues-destructive-march-across-queensland/104844858>

Cairns Botanic Gardens orchid collection being rebuilt after attack by tiny weevil – ABC News, 27 January 2025

A weevil that is smaller than a sunflower seed and causes enormous damage is botanist Charles Clarke's nemesis. The tiny orchid weevil, *Orchidophilus aterrimus*, has threatened to ruin the renowned orchid collection at the Cairns Botanic Gardens since it was discovered several years ago.

The far north Queensland garden houses tropical plants collected from all over the world, and the weevil's infestation has had devastating consequences.

"It has been incredibly frustrating ... a lot of those plants that were bequeathed to the gardens, and are not replaceable, have been lost in the process," Dr Clarke said.

The first giveaway of the weevil's presence is a few brown spots on a plant's leaves — a sign the beetles are eating their way into the plant's pseudobulb, which orchids use to store food, nutrients, air and water.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-12-27/cairns-botanic-gardens-orchid-weevil-collections-recovering/104764130>

'Rare and threatened': the bid to save Grampian flowers after fire disasters – The Guardian, 27 January 2025

The Grampians globe-pea, a critically endangered wiry shrub, had finished flowering and was fruiting when fires tore through its home in the Grampians national park, in western Victoria. The spiny plant with vibrant orange and yellow flowers is extremely rare and restricted to a handful of sites, including areas within the 76,000 hectares that burned over December and January.

Finding the globe-pea will be a priority when a plant rescue mission led by Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria heads to the Grampians to search for survivors and signs of life amid the charred landscape.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jan/27/victoria-grampians-fires-endangered-globe-pea-plant-rescue>

From the bush to the worldwide web, Brett champions Australian plants – The Senior, 27 January 2025

Professor Brett Summerell is passionate about plants, he works with them every day and considers himself fortunate to be able to do something he loves. When he's not at work, he's in his garden or bushwalking but always with plants in mind.

As Chief Scientist and Director Science, Education and Conservation, at the Botanic Gardens of Sydney, Brett, 66, champions plant conservation and the life that depends on them.

The scientist has been at the Botanic Gardens for more than 30 years, firstly as a plant pathologist and for the last 20 years leading a team of world-class plant scientists, students, volunteers and support staff.

<https://www.thesenior.com.au/story/8871056/brett-summerell-preserving-australias-plant-heritage/>

Darwin artists bring magic of tropical mangroves to life for national science museum – ABC News, 28 January 2025

Hungry mangrove crabs feasting on freshly dropped leaves, shy red lobsters and possum babies.

These are just a few of the creatures that live in the dark, humid mangrove forests along Darwin's coast, which have inspired a new collaboration from four local artists.

Jasmine Jan, who specialises in community art projects, dreamt up the concept, and has been collecting recycled denim to stitch with plants, animals and their descriptions.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-28/darwin-mangrove-art-project-to-show-at-questacon/104834614>

Adelaide corpse flowers spread endangered stench to Sydney and beyond – ABC News, 29 January 2025

It repulsed more than 20,000 people in Sydney last week, did the same in Geelong in 2024, and on both occasions had visitors queuing between two and five hours for the privilege.

Australians have a fascination with corpse flowers, or *Amorphophallus titanum* — an endangered plant endemic to Sumatra known for emitting a pungent stench to attract insects on the rare occasion it flowers.

But it is a little-known fact that both those corpse flowers on display, and indeed many in botanic gardens across the globe, came from Adelaide where a concerted effort to preserve the species is underway.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-29/sydney-and-geelong-corpse-flowers-from-adelaide-botanic-gardens/104868728>

Events and Opportunities

Seeds of Change: Conservation Through Diversity – 12th Annual Santa Barbara Botanic Garden Conservation Symposium – Free Virtual Livestream

Join us for our 12th Annual Conservation Symposium presented by the Nakashima-Rennie family, where our community and scientists come together to celebrate the incredible world of seeds and their vital role in restoring habitats and conserving rare species. This year's theme, "Seeds of Change: Conservation Through Diversity," will explore the fascinating diversity of seeds, emphasizing their importance as living resources crucial to our planet's ecological health.

<https://sbbotanicgarden.org/classes-events/12th-annual-santa-barbara-botanic-garden-conservation-symposium/>

AABR Vic AGM & Restoration checklist launch – Online, 27 February 2025

The AABR Vic new year will be kicking off with the launch of the "Planning for restoration projects – key steps and checklist".

The checklist presentation, 7:30-8:15pm, will consist of a panel discussion by those instrumental in creating the document which aims to help operationalise The Standards and summarise the process. Rob Scott will discuss the need for the document and explain the value of utilising the national standards as a structure and Matt Hall will share how the checklist can support restoration professionals. There will be time for Q & A as well.

The Annual General Meeting will be held from 8:15-9pm and provide an opportunity to meet the representatives of the AABR Vic branch and hear about the activities of the group as well as discussing ideas for 2025.

<https://www.aabr.org.au/event/aabr-vic-agm-restoration-checklist-launch/>

Australian Flora Foundation - Call for applications for research grants for 2026 – Deadline 17 March 2025

The Australian Flora Foundation invites applications for funding of research projects from individual researchers and research teams, to support original scientific studies on the biology and cultivation of Australian plants.

The Australian Flora Foundation was established in 1981 with the aim of fostering scientific research on the biology and cultivation of Australian plants. It aims to support research that will create improved understanding and greater awareness of the value of the Australian flora, leading to pathways for their conservation and utilisation.

Grants will be awarded for research projects to commence in early 2026, with funds available from December 2025.

<https://aff.org.au/grants/grant-criteria/>

Moorabool Mushroom Festival – Bacchus Marsh VIC, 12-13 April 2025

Early Bird tickets, volunteer, stallholder and speaker applications for the 2025 festival are now available at <https://myco.tidyhq.com/>

We are still working on the lineup but it will be a mix of mushroom growers, foragers, artists and scientists.

<https://myco.org.au/fungi-festival/>

NSW Nature Conservation Council, 14th Biennial Bushfire Conference – Surry Hills NSW, 21-23 May 2025

Can we burn to learn? Sustaining people, nature and Country

This will be an in-person event held in Sydney, at the Teachers Federation Conference Centre, 37 Reservoir St, Surry Hills NSW 2010.

There will also be hybrid options available, however we would encourage you to attend in person in order to fully enjoy the conference offerings, with a conference dinner, poster session and field day to be included.

https://www.nature.org.au/bushfire_conference_2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<https://isss2025.com.au/>

5th International Congress on Biological Invasions – Perth WA, 21-24 September 2025

From Threats to Solutions: Advancing Biosecurity

The 2025 Congress program builds around the following core themes:

- Advancing Global Biosecurity Policy
- Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Invasive Species Threats
- Engagement of First Nations in Invasive Species Management
- Citizen Science Engagement for Effective Invasive Species Management
- Technological Advancements in Invasive Species Management
- The Ecology and Evolution of Invaders
- Emerging Biosecurity Threats/Issues.

<https://www.icbi2025.com/>

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

The program dates for 2025 are:

Sunday 21 September – First Nations Gathering and NextGen Summit

Monday 22 September – Conference and Welcome Reception

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

Wednesday 24 September – Field Trip Program.

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

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

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

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

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