

the Propagator



International Plant Production Society Newsletter
Autumn 2026 Issue Number: 82

IPPS

Sharing Plant Production Knowledge Globally



Australia

<http://aus.ipps.org>



THIS EDITION:

Everything Epacrids!

Restoring Country through seed

Nothofagus codonandra propagation at RBGV

IPPS and Greenlife connect in WA



PRESIDENTS REPORT

Another year has rolled past, and they seem to be going quicker. Seems like Christmas was a few weeks ago. May is here and winter is around the corner. Of course, Australia is a huge country, so winter is so different across the states and even within some. In the far north, winter is the best time of the year. In the middle of the country, it means life is a bit wet and a bit cooler and down south it's just wet and cold. Retail slows down, but never really stops.

Talk to some nurserymen from northern Europe or Canada and northern USA and they will say we don't know what cold is. I remember talking to some nursery growers at an IPPS conference in Ireland. They were from Sweden - one from the south near the Danish border and one from northern Sweden near the Finish border. First was telling us that his winter highs were around 4°C. We thought that was bad, until the other guy said his winter highs were around -7°C - far too cold for me and my thongs!

I remember visiting European nurseries that turn into retail shops selling almost everything but plants. Many have great Christmas displays, others sell indoor furniture and some jewellery and handicrafts. Unlike here, where most gardens are still accessible, so these nurseries still have to find some sales. Indoor plants are great, but not enough. We all need to do something to keep cash coming in and bills paid.

It is this exposure to nursery folk around the world that is the real benefit of being part of the IPPS. I feel this is undersold as a positive part of what we do as a society. Over the years Di and I have made many friends from all parts of the world, and we always learn something from everyone. If you are a member and intend to travel, you must connect with IPPS members where you are going, they will enjoy meeting someone from Down Under and you will get an insight to their local industry.

IPPS changed its name last year from International Plant Propagators' Society to International Plant Production Society as an acknowledgement that so many members are not traditional propagators. Although propagation covers all aspects of taking a plant from a seed or a cutting to a mature plant, there are a wide range of skills in the growing on of the plants especially with many of the more unusual varieties. In Europe there are even different skills involved when you look at producing a million plants a week.

One thing that makes nurseries different from other industries is that the little TC plantlet put in agar in a lab in Vietnam is the same plant that may be harvested as a mature tree twenty years later. Other industries items change significantly as they move through different stages, but our plant is the same one, just older and larger. Consider some of the oldest of Japanese bonsai or some ancient English Oaks - plants that started their lives long before we really understood the physiology of plant growth. Plants that were started with a belief that they will be looked after for generations. It shows that our society works in the blind faith that there will always be someone loving and growing plants.

We can do good for the world by encouraging more young people to develop a love of plants whilst in their teens. We can nurture them as they grow and learn. It is why our motto of 'to seek and share' is just so important. We talk about sharing knowledge; however, it is also important to share passion and understanding. I know that we can be proud of any children that mature into great plant growers. We can be proud of sowing the *seeds of success*.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Hobart.

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS REPORT



NEW EMAIL ADDRESS FOR IPPS SECRETARIAT:

ippsaus@gmail.com

Please make a note of this new email address and update your records accordingly as the old email address pam@ipps.org.au will be phased out.

Membership Subscription Renewal 2026

Membership Renewals for 2026 are now OVERDUE. The Australian region is required to report to the International Board the number of membership subscriptions for 2026 this month. If you have not received your Membership Renewal Notice, please contact me at: ippsaus@gmail.com. If you are having difficulty in paying your subscription, please contact me so that we can look at the various options available for split payments.

BANK DETAILS:	Bendigo Bank BSB: 633-000 Account No: 140185737
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If paying by EFTPOS, please reference invoice number or name in the payment box so I can identify who payment is from, thank you.

Contact Detail Changes

To ensure office records are kept up to date, I would appreciate it if members could please notify me of any changed contact details. In particular, if you have changed telephone provider recently, please advise me of your new email address at: ippsaus@gmail.com. It is important that the Australian and International database records are kept updated, otherwise you could be missing out on receiving information.

IPPS 54th Annual Conference 2026 'Seeds of Success'

Tuesday 26th - Friday 29th May – Old Woolstore, Hobart. The week kicks off on Tuesday evening 5.15pm with a reception at Government House.

Pre-conference Tour

Saturday 23rd May - Tuesday 26th May. Welcome evening dinner at Hobart Brewing Company at 5.30pm. Get ready to explore some of Tasmania's most iconic spots: Derwent Valley, Mt Field National Park, the Tasman Peninsula, Tasman island boat tour and industry-based tours and visits along the way. **DON'T DELAY BOOK TODAY! Go to www.ipps.org for more information.**

Pam Berryman

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORS REPORT

Much is going on in the world around us, but for me our focus is the IPPS conference in Hobart at the end of May. That said there are many conferences happening around the world this year including the International Tour at the end of September travelling through four northern states in the USA.

The International editor reported in May that a total of 83 manuscripts had been received from 2025 with submissions including: Southern Africa 1, Australia 23, ERNA 19, SRNA 20, NZ 10. Well done to our conference committee, delegates and especially Ranjith.

Your International board has approved an update of our past Vision and Purpose statements as follows:

Our Vision: to empower every member to grow, lead, and transform horticulture worldwide. Guided by our motto, "to seek and to share." We connect members across continents to exchange ideas, inspire innovation, and shape the future of plant production.

Our Purpose: The International Plant Production Society (IPPS) is a global network of plant professionals including growers, educators, and researchers, united by a passion for advancing horticulture. We are dedicated to helping our members grow their expertise, improve their practices, and advance professionally. Our work connects research, education, and plant production in practical ways that improve the industry and the lives of those working in it.

We foster collaboration among horticulturists, educators, and researchers, both locally and globally, creating a community where knowledge is shared, innovation is encouraged, and best practices are exchanged across borders.

I would like to encourage our members to invite other passionate plants people to join the society and seek and share across the country and with others overseas. The benefits are potentially enormous.

Kind regards,

Bruce Higgs

WHERE ARE THE EPACRIDS?

Our focus for over 20 years has been on difficult to grow Western-Australian species where demand is strong for revegetation and restoration. Many successes include Asteraceae, Proteaceae, Cyperaceae, Dasygongonaceae, Santalaceae, Poaceae and others.

Much of these outcomes have been achieved due to sourcing quality seed (often in house collections), knowing what quality seed looks like and continuous experimentation with treatment methods, often radical. Demand for most Epacrids is low due to their limited occurrences in most bushland areas and likely buyers accepting that they are unlikely to obtain stock or for it to survive.

Species-Specific Notes

One stand-out for us has been *Brachyloma preissii*, initially courtesy of collection from emu poo. Clean up in preparation for germination. We currently utilise sulphuric acid, smoked water, and gibberellic acid in a mix of treatments. Germination rates of 60 % are achieved.



Figure 1: *Brachyloma preissii* remnant stock 2024 (left), *Brachyloma preissii* germination June 2025 (right)

Success has also been achieved with *Styphelia propinqua* and *Leucopogon insularis* utilising similar treatments. Results are variable due to seed quality. Our latest sowing of *L. insularis* at 11 grams resulted in germination of 50 plants in 3 days post-treatment. Other seed location results were much poorer.

Leucopogon parviflorus generally works well for us. *Acrotriche cordata* - again, sulphuric acid and smoked water, gibberellic acid combo produces good results from quality seed. Scarification provided no response.



Figure 2: Germinated *Leucopogon insularis* May 2025

General Observations

The following general observations and techniques have emerged from our ongoing trials and experiences with Epacrids:

- ◆ X-ray of various Epacrids suggests embryo presence at no better than 12% average.
- ◆ Dark well-formed seed produces best results, lighter coloured much less.
- ◆ Our trials with hydrogen peroxide gave no success with Epacrids, unlike others where benefit has been apparent.
- ◆ Weathering of seed is also worth considering (happy to share how we do this for various species; *Dianella*, *Hibbertia*, *Lepidosperma*).
- ◆ Root disturbance gives adverse outcomes. It was suggested by Dermot Molloy (Senior Curator RBGV) that direct sow to cell tray/tubes could assist.
- ◆ Our experience is that Epacrids are a preferred food for rats and mice.

It is only recently having achieved success with other varieties considered difficult, that we will focus more on Epacrids, particularly *Conostephium pendulum*. Stay tuned!

David Hancock, Natural Area

Contributions from Other Propagators

Through our connections with the International Plant Production Society, we have received these members offerings for your consideration.

Michelle Haby, Kangaroo Island

Styphelia humifusa - have had good success germinating in the past but can't keep them alive much past germination.

Best treatment: soak seed in a mild bleach solution for 30 min., place seed in a snap lock bag with moist sawdust. Put in a cool dark place (I put mine in the laundry cupboard). I got 55% germination using this method with 1-2 year old seed that I sowed in April. They germinated in June.

Interestingly enough, I got 0% using the same method with *Stenanthera conostephioides*, but maybe that's unsurprising as back when I did this, they were both called *Astroloma*.

Leucopogon parviflorus - usually have good success with this, particularly if you sow seed that's been through a birds gut.

Epacris impressa - I'm going to try this season as have finally gotten some seed. My friend says that he had good success using gibberellic acid (1000mg/L - I think).

Acrotriche depressa - slightly obsessed with this one and have thrown every treatment known to man at it, but with limited success. Leaching for 3 weeks in my toilet cistern seemed to be the common thread for this one. There was no real difference between what else I threw at it after I'd leached them. They are a winter germinator regardless of when you sow them.

Plants of Tasmania Propagators

The most effective propagation method for our *Epacris* species is through softwood cuttings. The best cuttings are taken from areas where there is a noticeable colour transition in the stem, as these tend to root more successfully. Semi-hardwood cuttings can also be used, but they generally take longer to develop roots. The ideal time to take cuttings is either before or after the flowering period, with spring being the most suitable season.

Once cuttings are prepared, they require a suitable propagation media to promote root formation. Different species exhibit varying degrees of success depending on the media used. For example, *Epacris impressa* was trialled in both Jiffy plugs and cutting mix. While both methods took approximately 12 weeks for root development, the success rate differed significantly. Cuttings in the standard cutting mix exhibited a higher success rate, whereas those in Jiffy plugs had only a 10% success rate. This lower success was likely due to the use of hardwood cuttings.

Other *Epacris* species, such as *E. graniticola*, *E. gunnii*, *E. lanuginosa*, *E. mucronata*, *E. myrtifolia*, *E. paludosa*, and *E. serpyllifolia*, tend to root more easily than *E. impressa* and generally strike well in a standard cutting mix.

Once the roots have developed sufficiently, transplanting must be done with great care to avoid disturbing the delicate root system. Root disturbance can significantly impact the plants' ability to establish in its new container. Despite careful handling, a loss rate of 10-20% is expected after potting up. Ensuring proper environmental conditions, such as consistent moisture and humidity, can help reduce transplant shock and improve overall survival rates.

Ben Croxford & Anouska

Nuts about Natives, Western Australia

We have had reasonable success growing several species of *Andersonia* from seed which germinate and grow well enough. Recently, these have been a species of which seed is germinated *in vitro* and then supplied to us as seedlings in agar, which we pot-up and grow on with good success.

For species with large fruit and hard seeds, we have had limited and inconsistent success by sowing seeds. We either just leave them in the nursery for multiple years (always wet), or remove them from irrigation over summer, only irrigate once a month and return them to nursery conditions in autumn.

Our best success has been with *Leucopogon australis*, *Leucopogon capitellatus*, and *Brachyloma preissii*, with limited germination in other *Leucopogon*, *Astroloma* and *Styphelia*.

We have grown many more species by cuttings including *Arcotriche cordata*, *Leucopogon parviflorus*, *Styphelia propinqua*, *conostephioides* and *Conostephium preissii*. The most successful cutting grown species for us is *Styphelia conostephioides* which strikes and grows well in the nursery. We have found other tubestock species to be slow growing with relatively poor root growth and in many cases these are best held for two seasons (repotting in between).



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Want to know more? Contact:

Carmen Welss
Programs Manager
BBM Global Footprints Scholarships
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www.globalfootprints.org.au

NOTHOFAGUS CODONANDRA AT RBGV MELBOURNE

Nothofagus codonandra has long been a notable and valued species within the living collections of the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria (RBGV), Melbourne.

The species was first introduced to the Gardens in 1996 from seed collected at Rivière Bleue, New Caledonia. This material was donated in 1995 by Alistair Watt, who also maintains a healthy 3 metre specimen at his Lavers Hill Arboretum in the Otway Ranges of south western Victoria.

Today, RBGV Melbourne maintains a single surviving specimen following the loss of a second plant during the millennial drought.

Although the species can be grown outdoors at the Melbourne site, it is sensitive to several environmental challenges. Winter cold, insufficient summer moisture, and browsing by possums all contribute to growth limitations and reduced vigour.

Propagation efforts, however, have been consistently successful. Over the past 25 years, the species has been propagated reliably from cuttings. Despite this, previously propagated plants failed to establish in the Gardens due to the species' narrow environmental requirements.

We collect cuttings from February to March (late Summer) when new growth has hardened. We trim the leaves by half and dip in purple Clonex hormone gel. Our cutting mix is 90% perlite and 10% peat or peat alternative, and we grow them on a bench heated to 22°C with fine fogging to achieve 75% humidity.

Recent propagation efforts have produced new tubed plants, and a further 30 cuttings are currently in production. With refined knowledge of its cultural needs particularly the importance of consistent humidity, RBGV aims to trial plantings in

more suitable microclimates within the Gardens.

As part of a broader conservation and living collections initiative, RBGV Melbourne also plans to distribute propagated material to other botanic gardens across Australia to help secure this species in cultivation.

Dermot Molloy

Senior Curator Horticulture
RBGV Melbourne



Have a document of interest, protocol or fact-sheet you'd like to share with the IPPS community? Contribute to the society ethos of 'Seek and Share' by submitting your piece to The Propagator newsletter at: theippspropagator@outlook.com

UPCOMING EVENTS



International Plant Production Society 54th Conference

Seeds of Success
Hobart 2026

Old Woolstore Apartments & Hotel

Pre-conference tour Saturday 23 May to Tuesday 26 May

Get ready to explore some of Tasmania's most iconic spots! Derwent Valley, Mt Field National Park, the Peninsula, and the Tasman Island boat tour, and industry-based tours and visits along the way.

Conference Tuesday 26 May 2026 to Friday 29 May

Alongside exciting tours and hands-on experiences, we've lined up dynamic presentations from leading experts in genetics, biosecurity, breeding, and more. Whether you're passionate about horticultural science or just keen to learn, these sessions promise fresh insights and thought-provoking discussions. The week kicks off on Tuesday evening with a reception at Government House, followed by hands-on demos on Wednesday and a mix of inspiring speakers and industry tours on Thursday and Friday.

Registrations open 1 January 2026

<https://aus.ipps.org/event/ipps-54th-annual-conference-hobart-2026>



IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

Please note the email address for IPPS admin/secretariat has changed to ippsaus@gmail.com and any old addresses are now invalid. Make sure you update your email and phone contacts to the new email address and delete any old ones. Members should have already received a few emails from this new address - please check to ensure they are coming through to your inbox, or spam folders if they are not. Any emails sent to the old addresses (pam@ipps.org.au) will not reach Pam.

Members attending the 2026 Hobart conference in May must book to obtain a ticket for the welcome reception being held at Government House on Tuesday the 26th. Tickets are free of charge and must be booked through 'Try Booking.' Follow the instructions on the leaflet to the right to secure your booking. Bookings close Tuesday 19th May.

If you are attending tours during the conference, please remember to fill out and sign the 'Visitor Induction' and 'Biosecurity Policy' forms for the visit to the medicinal cannabis farm - Tasmanian Botanics. These forms have been emailed out by Pam and must be returned, along with a copy of valid photo ID no later than 3-weeks prior to the conference (~5th May). Delegates who have not completed both forms or who are unable to provide appropriate photo identification will not be permitted entry to the facility.

MEET THE 2026 IPPS EX-CHANGEE

Demi Tait is the successful candidate for the exchange program between the Australian and South African IPPS regions.

Demi is a passionate horticulturalist and researcher, with experience in plant production and tissue culture. She has participated in research projects funded by the South African Avocado Growers' Association and been a module tutor of third and fourth year horticulture courses at the University of Pretoria. We look forward to meeting her in Hobart at the 2026 International Plant Production conference and hope she enjoys her time in Australia!



Meet Demi

2026 South African Exchange





GOVERNMENT HOUSE
TASMANIA

**Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC,
Governor of Tasmania, and Emeritus Professor Don Chalmers AO
request the pleasure of your company**

at a Reception for the
International Plant Production Society, Australian Region

Tuesday 26 May 2026 | 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Please arrive by 5:45 pm

Dress: Lounge Suit/Day Wear

Bookings close at 9:00 am on Tuesday 19 May 2026 | Late bookings unable to be accepted

There is **no charge** for guests to obtain a ticket. Tickets are obtained via the Government House website as follows:

Go to www.govhouse.tas.gov.au and click on the 'Tours, Events & Activities' tab on the right-hand side of the homepage. Select 'Events' from the drop-down menu. Select 'Click to Book' for the **International Plant Production Society** OR alternatively, scan the QR Code below:



You will be directed to the Government House Tasmania event on trybooking.com. Bookings for this event will open from **9:00 am on Tuesday 21 April 2026**.

Enter the Password/Access code: **IPPS26**. This must be typed in, not copied and pasted.

Complete the booking as per the TryBooking website instructions. Tickets should be booked in the name of the **guest(s)** who wish to attend. Ticket(s) will be sent to the guest's nominated email address. Please check your Spam/Junk mailbox as the tickets may appear there.

TICKETS

Guests, you will need to print your ticket and bring the ticket with you to Government House for this event. Alternatively, we can scan your ticket from your mobile phone.

THIS INVITATION IS NOT YOUR TICKET AND CANNOT BE PRESENTED AT THE DOOR FOR ENTRY



HOBART APPROACHES

Join us in Hobart this May for the 54th Annual Conference of the International Plant Propagators Society — a landmark gathering for plant production professionals from across Australia and the globe.

Set against the stunning backdrop of Tasmania, the conference runs from 26th–29th May 2026 at the iconic Old Woolstore Apartment Hotel, with pre-conference tours beginning 23rd May. Under the inspiring theme of ‘Seeds of Success,’ this year’s program promises an excellent mix of education, innovation and connection.

The week kicks off with a welcome reception at Government House on Tuesday 26th May — a truly special setting to reunite with colleagues and meet new faces. Wednesday sees delegates head to Westland Nurseries at Seven Mile Beach for a full day of talks, workshops and hands-on demonstrations covering grafting, tissue culture, irrigation and greenhouse structures.

Thursday begins with sessions themed around ‘Breeding for Success’ and plant propagation, featuring leading voices from across the industry, followed by compelling speaker sessions on conservation horticulture, rare and endangered species, and market dynamics. The evening culminates in the Gala Dinner at the Henry Jones Art Hotel — always a conference highlight.

Friday's program offers morning tours of Tasmanian Botanics' cannabis farm, the Materials Institute, and Tibballs Nursery, before afternoon nursery tours provide one final taste of Tasmania's thriving horticulture scene.

With a blend of industry expert speakers, panel discussions, industry sponsors, and the warmth of Hobart hospitality, we'll see you in Tasmania!

Angus Stewart



CYCAD 2026

13th International Conference on Cycad Biology

17th to 22nd August 2026, Sydney Australia



Cultivating Conservation Through Science and Horticulture



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A national, on-farm technical roadshow connecting growers, suppliers and industry partners through hands-on learning and live demonstrations



What To Expect

Live Demonstrations | Applied Learning | Real-World Solutions
Explore Integrated Management Strategies



Pest Management



Weed Management



Disease Management



Nutrition Management



Roadshow Dates

Full details and registrations coming soon

QLD

Thu JUN
11

SA

Fri JUN
19

NSW

Thu JUL
02

VIC

Tue JUL
21

WA

Thu JUL
30

National Webinar Series

PRE-EVENT WEBINARS

April 16 June 04
May 07

WEBINARS THURSDAY
12:30 PM AEST



POST-EVENT WEBINARS

August 13 September 10
August 27 September 24

[EVENT & REGISTRATION UPDATES HERE](#)

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BIG TURNOUT AT WA EVENT

JOINT IPPS AND GREENLIFE PROMOTION FOR PERTH 2027 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND TOURS

On March 17th the Natural Area business in Western Australia hosted over 60 participants to share good times and the latest information on the 2 organizations. The idea of a joint event came from Greenlife WA President and IPPS member Ross Hooper of Zanthorrhea Nursery. Ross is also a member of the 2027 International Conference organizing committee. The 2027 committee decided to engage with Greenlife to access more nursery staff and share the international conference plans.

The attendees were treated to high quality catered morning tea and welcomed by Natural Area COO Ben Cocker on behalf of Directors Luke and Davina Summers.

Lisa Passmore of Greenlife WA provided a comprehensive update on the relevant issues for its members.

David Hancock introduced the 2027 committee members and made a solid pitch for new IPPS membership and assistance with the event. The recent influx of new members was mentioned, as well as the focus on regional nurseries participating in 2027.



The current committed 2027 sponsors were celebrated along with supporting nurseries.

A presentation and PowerPoint covering the Natural Area integrated operations was next, followed by a tour of the nursery facilities and stock of 2 million tubes.

It was beyond excellent bringing together such a large group with tangible results achieved by 2 additional 2027 committee members volunteering and potential sponsors and new members identified.

It was wonderful to formalize the nomination of Krystena Winter to the Board of IPPS Australia. Krystena has a long and outstanding history of horticulture in WA. She is a very valued addition to the Board and the 2027 conference committee.



A good number of follow up contacts will be pursued as the 2027 committee works through the actions arising.

Particular mention was made of International Director Peter Lewis and his current role and situation in the United Arab Emirates. Our best wishes continue to be extended to Peter.

Overall, this event is considered to have been an outstanding success and another example of how IPPS and nursery people can come together and move forward when the information is shared.



The magnificent contributions made by the nursery team are acknowledged with particular credit to Hort Services Leader Andrew Nguyen, Plant Quality Leader Sabine Suess along with the nursery and seed team members.

David Hancock
Natural Area

PROPAGATING CULTURE: GROWING PLANTS, RESTORING COUNTRY

Across Australia, ecological restoration is gathering pace. Ambitious targets are being set - millions of hectares to be restored, vast quantities of native seed required, entire landscapes reimagined through planting and regeneration. There is a sense of urgency, and rightly so. Yet beneath this momentum lies a quieter, less visible constraint. The primary challenge is not land, labour, or funding. It is seed.

More specifically, the challenge lies in the expertise needed to cultivate that seed appropriately, in its native environment, while respecting both ecological integrity and cultural significance.

Many of the species now emerging as priorities for restoration do not fit easily within conventional nursery systems. They are not the familiar, production-friendly species that respond predictably to standardised treatments. Instead, they are often bush foods, medicinal plants, or culturally significant species - plants that occupy specific ecological niches and carry deep meaning within the landscapes from which they originate.

These species can be notoriously difficult to propagate. Dormancy mechanisms are often complex and poorly documented. Germination cues may depend on subtle environmental triggers - heat, smoke, seasonal timing, or soil conditions that are difficult to replicate outside of Country. Storage behaviour varies widely, with some species losing viability quickly or responding unpredictably to standard seed banking practices.

In many cases, the knowledge required to grow these plants well has never been formally written down. It has been held, instead, within living knowledge systems passed between generations, embedded in language, and practiced through direct relationship with Country.

Within Indigenous contexts, propagation is not simply a technical act. It is part of a broader cultural system - often described as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) - where the act of collecting, preparing, and growing plants is inseparable from questions of timing, place, and authority.

Seed is not just gathered when it is physically ready, but when it is culturally appropriate to do so. Seasonal indicators - flowering events, animal movements, changes in weather patterns - inform when species should be collected. Handling practices may vary depending on the plant, its use, and its cultural significance. Just as importantly, there are clear understandings about who holds the right to work with particular species or landscapes.

In this context, propagation becomes something more than a means of production. It becomes an act of cultural continuity and a means of maintaining relationships between people, plants, and place.

Modern restoration systems, however, have largely been designed for scale. They favour uniformity - standard species lists, bulk seed supply, centralised nurseries, and consistent germination protocols. These systems have enabled restoration to expand rapidly, but they are not always well suited to the complexity of culturally significant species.

A structural mismatch begins to emerge. The plants that matter most, ecologically and culturally, are often those least compatible with industrial-scale production systems. They require local provenance, small-batch handling, and adaptive approaches that respond to specific conditions on the ground. It is within this gap that new models are beginning to take shape.

Initiatives such as Bush Botanics are demonstrating what a different system can look like. Rather than extracting seed and centralising production, these models are grounded on Country - where plants are collected, propagated, and grown within the landscapes they belong to.

Out in the heart of the country, propagation is not separated from use or meaning. Bush foods, medicinal plants, and restoration species are grown within the same system. Seed banks (as pictured below and on next page) sit alongside small-scale nurseries. Ranger programs and community enterprises form the operational backbone. Knowledge flows between Elders, practitioners, and younger generations in real time.

These systems operate differently from conventional nurseries. They are slower, more adaptive, and deeply embedded in place. They allow for experimentation, observation, and the application of knowledge that may not exist in formal literature but is refined through practice.

In many cases, on-Country propagation achieves higher success rates with difficult species than centralised production. But its value extends beyond technical outcomes. It creates training environments, supports livelihoods, and strengthens cultural governance over plant use and restoration. Propagation, in this sense, becomes a bridge connecting ecological restoration with economic opportunity and cultural renewal.



Technical Inset: Propagation notes from Central Desert field practice

Mulga (*Acacia aneura*)

A dominant arid-zone species across the central deserts. Seed has a hard, impermeable coat requiring scarification. Boiling water treatment followed by overnight soaking is effective.

Germination is typically reliable under warm conditions. Direct seeding can outperform tubestock when timed to rainfall events. Seed storage class: Orthodox - tolerates drying and long-term storage under controlled conditions.

Witchetty Bush (*Acacia kempeana*)

A culturally and ecologically significant species associated with witchetty grubs. Seed coat is hard but slightly less resistant than Mulga. Hot water treatment improves germination uniformity. Establishes well in sandy soils with minimal intervention once germinated. Seed storage class: Orthodox - suitable for extended storage, though viability improves with careful temperature control.

Desert Kurrajong (*Brachychiton gregorii*)

A small tree adapted to arid environments, producing buoyant seeds with moderate dormancy. Germination benefits from soaking and warm conditions. Seedlings are relatively hardy once estab-

lished but sensitive to overwatering in early stages. Seed storage class: Orthodox to Intermediate - tolerates drying, though longevity can vary depending on storage conditions.

Bush Tomato (*Solanum centrale*)

A widely used Central Desert food plant. Germination can be variable and often benefits from scarification or natural processing (e.g. passage through animals). Fresh seed performs best. Sensitive to frost and overwatering during early growth stages. Seed storage class: Orthodox (short-lived) - viability declines over time without careful storage.



Taken together, these species illustrate an important principle in restoration: the most effective plant selections are those that rebuild systems, not just vegetation cover. In the Central Desert context, species such as Mulga and Witchetty Bush re-establish nitrogen cycling, soil stability,

and faunal relationships. Desert Kurrajong contributes long-term structure and resilience, while Bush Tomato responds rapidly to rainfall, restoring productivity at the ground layer. The result is not simply a collection of plants, but the re-emergence of ecological function across multiple layers.

Just as importantly, these species carry cultural use and meaning. Bush Tomato is a valued food source. Witchetty Bush connects directly to traditional food systems through the witchetty grub lifecycle. Native grasses and medicinal plants, often propagated alongside these species, form part of a broader system of knowledge and care. When these species are integrated intentionally into restoration design, they begin to do more than stabilise landscapes. They create opportunities.

Bush foods can be harvested, processed, and sold. Medicinal plants can support local health practices and small-scale production. Seed collection and propagation become skilled activities that generate income while strengthening connection to Country. In this way, restoration shifts from a cost centre to a foundation for on-Country enterprise. This is where models such as Bush Botanics become particularly important. By aligning propagation systems with cultural knowledge and practical enterprise pathways, they demonstrate how restoration can support both ecological recovery and long-term community benefit.

For practitioners working in propagation, this shift invites a reconsideration of familiar assumptions. Provenance becomes more than a genetic concern - it becomes a cultural one. Seed is not simply sourced from a region, but from a specific landscape, accompanied with its own responsibilities and relationships.

Germination protocols begin to loosen. Rather than fixed recipes, they become responsive processes - guided by observation, seasonal variation, and knowledge that may sit outside conventional scientific frameworks. Storage practices must adapt to species that resist orthodox classification.

Perhaps most significantly, propagation begins to depend as much on relationships as on tech-

nique. Access to seed - and the ability to work with it appropriately - is grounded in trust, collaboration, and respect for cultural authority.

As restoration efforts continue to scale, there is a growing recognition that existing systems will not be sufficient on their own. Meeting future demand will require not just more production, but different kinds of production.

This points toward a distributed model - a network of place-based propagation systems embedded across landscapes. Our work supporting Indigenous seed enterprises and on-Country propagation systems, and through its grounded, community-led implementation, together reflect the early architecture of such a system.

These approaches do not replace conventional nurseries. They extend them by filling critical gaps, diversifying species availability, and improving the ecological integrity of restoration efforts.

In the end, propagation sits at the heart of restoration in a way that is both practical and symbolic. Every seed carries the potential for renewal, but also a story of where it comes from, how it has been cared for, and where it belongs. These seeds are the repositories of centuries of biological and cultural evolution.

It goes beyond technical skill, and calls for patience, humility, and a willingness to learn from knowledge systems that have sustained these landscapes for generations. As the restoration movement continues to evolve, the question is not simply how many plants we can produce. It is whether we can learn to grow them in a way that restores not only ecosystems, but the relationships that sustain them.

William Martin
Bush Botanics

Scan here to check out the Bush Botanics website to find out more about their fascinating enterprise!





FLORAL WORDFIND CHALLENGE



U A E P T R E S E D S T R U T S B A N K S I A C W
 S Z D A H T N A E T C A R B B E B Y A E T O R P P
 P O I N S E T T I A C E S I D A R A P F O D R I B
 B H H K F B H S G H H A H R I D J Y U A I L H A D
 Q T C M X U D A E V E R B E N A A S E A Y O H I P
 G N R C Y T V L R J R S B Q J P S I P A D B I N X
 R I O K Y T O I B F R T O N D H M A H I O E S O R
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the Propagator



Want to contribute to our society newsletter? The Propagator, is on the lookout for interesting submissions, on any topic relating to horticulture.

We welcome all skill levels of writers and can provide advice and support throughout the process. Articles would ideally be between 400-1500 words and submitted in a Word format with some high resolution images to accompany the piece.

Submissions could be about horticultural news, events, technical projects, plant profiles and so much more!

For more information, or to make a submission, please email Lisa Wightwick at:

theippspropagator@outlook.com



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| Agapanthus | Daffodill | Hydrangea | Poppy |
| Anthurium | Dahlia | Impatiens | Protea |
| Azalea | Daisy | Ipomoea | Rafflesia |
| Banksia | Daphne | Iris | Rose |
| Begonia | Dietes | Jasmine | Serruaia |
| Bird of Paradise | Digitalis | Kangaroo Paw | Stalice |
| Bluebell | Frangipani | Lavender | Sturts Desert Pea |
| Boronia | Fuchsia | Lily | Sunflower |
| Bougainvillea | Gardenia | Lotus | Teloepa |
| Bracteantha | Geranium | Magnolia | Tulip |
| Buttercup | Gerbera | Nemophila | Verbena |
| Callistemon | Grevillea | Orchid | Wattle |
| Camellia | Heliconia | Pansy | Wisteria |
| Cherry Blossom | Hibiscus | Peony | |
| Chrysanthemum | Hoya | Pink Heath | |
| Clematis | Hyacinth | Poinsettia | |



ANSWERS

