



1 September 2010

Celebrate a living history this Wattle Day

The Australian National Botanic Gardens is celebrating the start of spring this Wattle Day with a special exhibition exploring the evolutionary relationship between wattles.

Gardens executive director Dr Judy West today opened the exhibit of 100 wattles, called the Tree of Trees, at the Gardens.

“Visitors can wander through a web of potted wattles showing the family tree of this Australian icon,” she said.

“This is an exciting, hands-on exhibition that highlights the incredible way leaf forms and sizes have changed as wattles evolved in different parts of the country.

“Visitors can explore what the evolutionary differences mean, and see first hand how science is shedding light on the history of our biodiversity.”

The Tree of Trees exhibit reflects a long-term study carried out at the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research, a joint venture between the Australian National Botanic Gardens and CSIRO Plant Industry.

Botanist and molecular systematist Dr Joe Miller said scientists have used DNA sequence data to understand how wattles evolved.

“This research will help us work out which species are closely related to each other and share a recent common ancestor. With this knowledge we can build a picture of the way plant architecture and leaf form have changed over time, and how wattles have adapted as they moved across the landscape,” he said.

This work informs basic research on Australian biodiversity including conservation studies, bio-control of invasive weeds and revegetation of degraded landscapes. It also helps in development of a ‘predictive classification system’, which can anticipate the characteristics of each wattle species based solely on its name.

The display is also the perfect way to celebrate the beauty and rich heritage of the wattle in Australian history. The Gardens has around one third of all Australian plant species in its collection, including several hundred species of wattles.

National Wattle Day is a celebration of our natural environment. On 1 September each year, Wattle Day highlights the golden blooms that herald the start of spring.

What: Tree of Trees launch
When: 12.30pm
Where: Adjacent to the Eucalypt Lawn

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Attachment A: A brief history of Golden Wattle