

# LIBRARY

Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

This PDF has been created for digital preservation. It may be used for research but is not suitable for other purposes. It may be superseded by a more current version or just be out-of-date and have no relevance to current situations.

Only absolutely essential work on roads and firebreaks will be allowed. Roads will be upgraded so it is less likely that vehicles will pick up infected soil.

CALM researchers are working hard to understand more about the nature of the disease and how it spreads in order to find a cure.

## Want to know more?

For further information please contact:

The Regional Manager,  
Department of Conservation and  
Land Management,  
44 Serpentine Road,  
ALBANY, W.A. (098) 41 7133

The Branch Manager,  
Environmental Protection,  
Department of Conservation and Land  
Management,  
50 Hayman Road,  
COMO, W.A. (09) 367 0333

Local rangers and reserve officers will be able to provide you with specific information on their area.

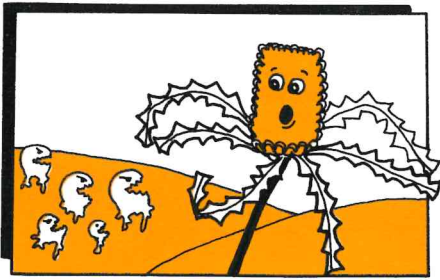
Your Local Ranger is:



# DIEBACK DIEBACK

on the  
South Coast

PAM00095



## **DIEBACK: What is it?**

Dieback in W.A. is a disease caused by a fungus called *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. The fungus was introduced from the tropics. It is microscopic and lives in the soil. Plants die when the fungus infects their roots, because their roots rot and they can't take up water.

Although you can't see the actual fungus, you can see where it has been. Because infected plants are deprived of water they often look similar to plants dying of drought.

Of the 900 species of plants that dieback can kill, most, like banksias and dryandras, die very quickly. Their leaves turn brown or yellow and, unlike some burnt plants, they will never resprout.

Some trees, such as jarrah, can fight the fungus in their roots for years, and die back slowly. Hence the common name for the disease is 'dieback'.

## Where is it?

The fungus is widely spread throughout the south-west, but fortunately some of our national parks are still free of the disease.



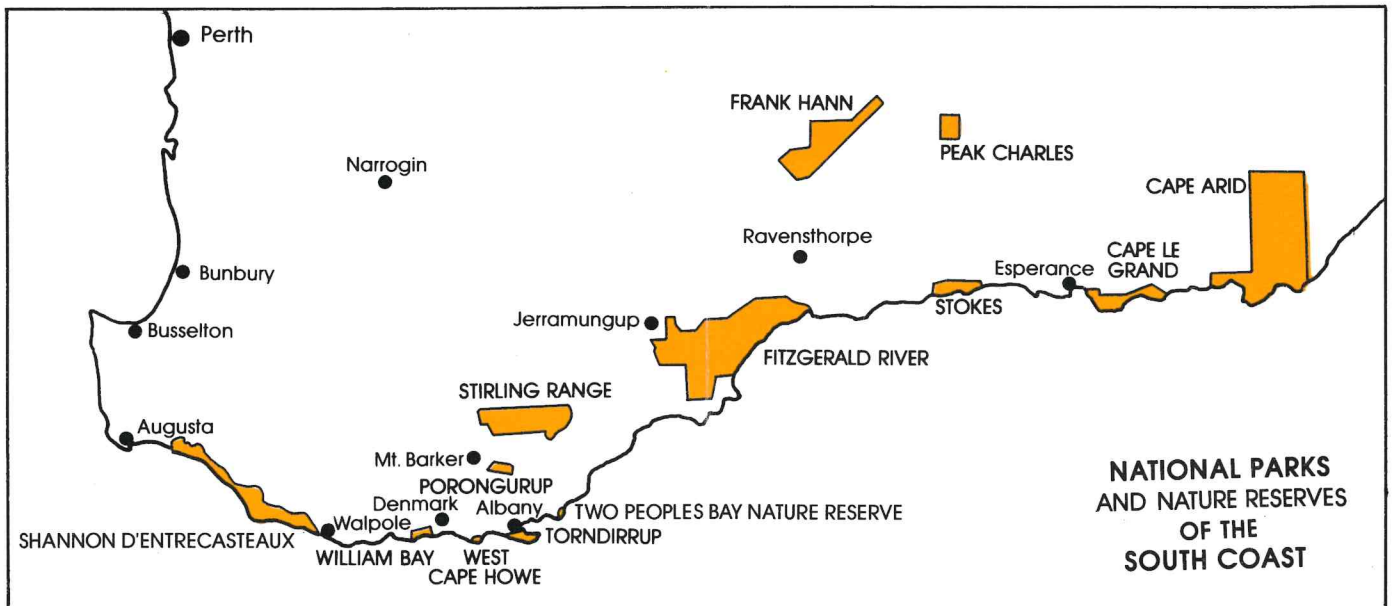
The south coast areas are at risk because the climate is warm and moist for most of the year. Dieback thrives in warm and moist conditions because it is a tropical fungus.

Unfortunately, many of the plants so superbly adapted to growing on the infertile south coast have very little resistance to dieback.

## Why must we stop its spread?

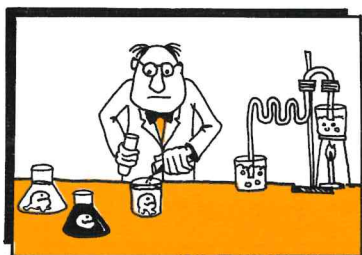
Many of the plants which live in the national parks and reserves of the south coast are rare and endangered. These rare plants aren't found anywhere else in the world. If dieback infects the areas where they grow, we may lose many species—some of them forever.

Once the fungus has invaded a patch of bush there is, at present, no cure.



Whole tracts of beautiful bushland can be turned into dieback 'graveyards'. The best way to prevent dieback is to stop it spreading.

Researchers are working hard to find a cure, but we must buy time by keeping dieback restricted to as small an area as possible.



## How does it spread?

Dieback fungus has two types of spores. The small spore is very active and swims in water. The large spore is formed in the roots of plants and is inactive. Both spores can reproduce the fungus.

Dieback spreads downhill with waterflow very quickly. It moves uphill more slowly.

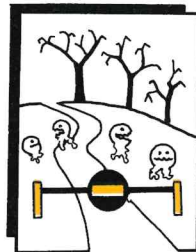
Sometimes it can move from plant to plant if their roots are touching.

The large spores remain dormant in the soil and anything which moves the infected plants or soil from one place to another will also spread the infection.



One of the main ways of spreading infected soil and plants is on the underbodies and wheels of cars and machines. Four-wheel drives and heavy earth-moving equipment are particularly likely to move soil in this way.

## How can you help stop the spread?



Because vehicles are a common way of spreading dieback, it is sometimes necessary to close tracks and restrict access to certain areas.

If you visit the south coast keep to well-formed, well-drained roads and obey 'road closed' signs. As few areas as possible will be closed, and by keeping out of them you will help preserve the beauty of the rest of the parks and reserves.

## What is CALM doing to stop the spread?

The CALM Department is committed to preventing the spread of dieback.



We are very strict about hygiene. All our vehicles and machinery are washed down after working in dieback areas to prevent them spreading dieback to uninfected sites.