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Wongan melaleuca

E n d a n g e r e d F l o r a o f W e s t e r n A u s t r a l i a

If you think you have seen this plant, please call the Department of Conservation and Land Management's (CALM's) Merredin District office on (08) 9041 2488.

Wongan melaleuca is a dense, rounded shrub that grows to one to 1.5 metres tall and wide. The leaves are soft and grey-green in colour and are arranged in pairs of opposite members. Each pair is turned at right angles to the succeeding pair.

The species is most distinctive when flowering (usually in August) with each inflorescence and usually consists of four cream flowers, that have a brilliant reddish-pink style. The fruits are typically barrel shaped and cork textured, about 3.5 millimetres in length and four millimetres wide.

Wongan melaleuca is restricted to the Wongan Hills area where it grows on gravelly slopes adjacent to lateritic breakaways. It is typically associated with mallee over crown melaleuca heath (*Melaleuca coronicarpa*) and other *Melaleuca* sp. Despite extensive surveys of similar habitat, Wongan melaleuca is known from just one population which contains less than 300 plants.

Wongan melaleuca was declared as Rare Flora in July 1989 and is currently ranked as Endangered under World Conservation Union (IUCN) criteria.

Threats include inappropriate fire regimes, soil erosion, weed invasion and maintenance activities.

Regular monitoring of plants, including tagging and recording locations and liaison with stakeholders, are important recovery actions currently being undertaken to minimise these threats.

CALM is developing the Wongan-Ballidu Threatened Flora Management Program, which outlines recovery actions identified for Wongan melaleuca and a range of other species. CALM has also established the Merredin District Threatened Flora Recovery Team, which coordinate recovery actions that address the threats to the survival of this species in the wild.

Storage of seeds at CALM's Threatened Flora Seed Centre provides ex-situ conservation in the case of a catastrophic event that destroys the single known wild population. Developing a fire management strategy and researching the biology and ecology of the species will also enhance our understanding of the species and result in improved management.



Wongan melaleuca flowers in August. The cream flowers often have reddish-pink tips, giving the impression it has been dipped in dye. Photo – P. Blechynden



Old flowers can be seen above the dense foliage of Wongan melaleuca. Photo – Paul Brown

Recovery of a Species



CALM is committed to ensuring that Declared Rare Flora does not become extinct in the wild. This is done through the preparation of a Recovery Plan (RP) or Interim Recovery Plan (IRP) that outline the recovery actions that are required to urgently address the threatening processes most affecting the ongoing survival of threatened taxa in the wild and begin the recovery process.

IRPs are prepared by CALM and implemented by regional or district recovery teams made up of representatives from CALM, the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, the Department of Agriculture, community groups, private landowners, local shires and other government organisations.

Wongan melaleuca

Recovery actions that have been recommended and will be progressively implemented to protect the species include:

- ongoing liaison with land managers;
- stimulation of regeneration;
- implementation of further surveys;
- regular monitoring of the health of the populations;
- collection and storage of seeds at CALM's Threatened Flora Seed Centre;
- maintenance of live plants away from the wild (i.e. in botanical gardens);
- carrying out of weed control as necessary;
- development of a fire management strategy; and
- investigation of the biology and ecology of the species.



Wongan melaleuca is restricted to the Wongan Hills area, where it often occurs with mallees on gravelly slopes. Photo – K. Roy-Chowdhury

IRPs will be deemed a success if the number of individuals within the population and/or the number of populations have increased by 10 per cent.

This poster was prepared by the Department of Conservation and Land Management.



Wongan melaleuca grows to approximately 1.5 metres tall and wide. Photo – J.A. Cochrane

