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Sargent's snakebush

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've seen this plant, please call
CALM Merredin District on (08) 9041 2488**

Commonly known as Sargent's snakebush, *Hemiandra rutilans* is now presumed extinct in the wild. Before dying in 1994, the last remaining plant produced masses of dark red flowers, approximately 2 cm in length, between October and December.

Sargent's snakebush is a low-growing plant to 10 cm in height, with grey-green, sharply pointed leaves to 21 mm long and 2 mm wide. It has been confused with both colourful snakebush (*Hemiandra* sp. (Watheroo) and red snakebush (*H. coccinea*) and its relationship with these is not yet precisely defined.

Oswald Sargent first collected the species in 1924 from 'Sand Springs', near York, but this population has not been relocated. A solitary plant that had been found near Dowerin more recently died in 1994, but two seeds were retrieved and cutting material was collected for grafting.

Sargent's snakebush was declared as Rare in 1991 and ranked as Critically Endangered in 1995.

CALM has set up the Merredin District Threatened Flora Recovery Team to co-ordinate recovery actions addressing the most threatening processes affecting the species' survival in the wild (See overleaf).

Since Sargent's snakebush is presumed extinct in the wild, CALM is keen to know of any new sightings.

If unable to contact the District office on the above number, please phone CALM's Wildlife Branch on (08) 9334 0422.



Although presumed extinct in the wild a few cutting grown plants survive at Kings Park and Botanic Garden. Photo – Luke Sweedman

Recovery of a Species



CALM is committed to ensuring that Critically Endangered taxa do not become extinct in the wild. This is done through the preparation of a Recovery Plan (RP) or Interim Recovery Plan (IRP), which outlines the recovery actions that are required to urgently address those 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 consisting of representatives from CALM, Kings Park and Botanic Garden, community groups, private landowners, local Shires and various government organisations.

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Essential recovery actions that have been implemented to protect the species include:

Protection from current threats: Development of a fire protection plan, conducting further surveys, and regular monitoring of the habitat where the last remaining plant died.

Protection from future threats: Ensuring that relevant authorities, land owners and CALM personnel are aware of the species' presence and the need to protect it, and that all are familiar with the threatening processes identified in the Interim Recovery Plan.

Desirable recovery actions, which are progressively being implemented, include:

The maintenance of live plants away from the wild (i.e. in botanical gardens); researching the biology and ecology of Sargent's snakebush; and enhancing plant numbers by removal of weeds, amelioration of some other limiting factor, or by direct propagation and translocation techniques.

IRPs will be deemed a success if essential recovery actions have been implemented, and identified threatening processes have been removed within three years of their approval.



This photo illustrates the grey-green leaves and dark red flowers typical of this species.
Photo – Luke Sweedman



The last remaining wild plant produced masses of dark red flowers just before it died in 1994. Photo – Robert Boase

