

Marri seed collection

Richard Mazanec from CALM's Dwellingup Research Centre is planning to establish the first comprehensive seed collection of marri.

Marri is a major eucalypt species in south-west forests but has historically attracted little commercial interest.

Its excessive kino (gum) reduces the value of what is otherwise a sound timber.

Seed collection is the first step in Richard's work of improving the genetic potential of species used in rehabilitation of degraded lands in the south-west.

His work, supported by Alcoa, focusses on

species used in the rehabilitation of bauxite pits.

Over the past few years there has been an increased interest in developing local species for rehabilitation.

Work on jarrah is already well-advanced and marri is next.

Richard is preparing specifications for the collection that will extend over the full geographic range of the species.

He aims to get a sampling of the full genetic diversity of marri. A particular effort will be made to include areas known to produce low kino logs.

The seed collected from each of about 300 parent trees of families

will then be planted out in family trials to carefully measure all aspects of performance.

The results will show which area produces the best performing seed and which families or individuals are superior and worthy of inclusion in further breeding work or in seed orchards.

Richard's assistant Tim Birmingham has begun a reconnaissance of the present heavy flowering of marri to make an initial selection of sampling sites.

Seed collection will take place next summer when a heavy seed crop is expected.

- JOHN BARTLE