

Good oil to light your fire and clean machines safely

AN environmentally friendly industrial-strength solvent may be the key to revegetation of much of WA's degraded farmland.

CALM's Vegetation and Tree Planting Advisory Service (VATPAS) has been working with Professor Allan Barton from Murdoch University and consultant scientist Greg Eaton of Mertz Australia Pty Ltd. Their project was to develop eucalyptus oil as a solvent that can replace ozone-depleting industrial chemicals.

Safety benefits

Tests carried out by CALM and Alcoa Australia have found that "Eucasol", as the product will be called, compares more than favourably with petrochemical solvents currently in use by industry. The natural product also has health and safety benefits, as well as being totally bio-degradable.

Eucalyptus oil is distilled from the leaves of several species of mallee-type eucalypts which occur naturally throughout the wheatbelt of WA.

Higher oil yield

CALM staff, in association with Professor Barton, have been screening these species to select trees which have a higher than normal leaf-oil

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content. This year seed orchards will be established using seed collected from the mallees to produce genetically improved seed for future commercial plantings.

CALM has also received funding this year to plant more than 120 kilometres of hedge-size plantings to examine various commercial planting layouts and compare the performance of several different species of high oil-producing eucalypts.

After an establishment period of three to four years, the mallees can be harvested every two years, yielding between 70-100 kilograms of eucalyptus oil per hectare.

Pilot scheme

Another potential eucalyptus oil product being tested is the "Mallee Boy Firelighter". Made of eucalyptus oil, beeswax and sawdust, the firelighters will be included in bagged firewood supplied to Rottnest Island in a pilot scheme.

Good Samaritan Industries will manufacture the firelighters and bag the firewood under a 12-month contract.

Sharefarming partnerships similar to those in

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