

Traveller's joy reaches 500,000

THE number of plants in the State's native plant collection has hit the 500,000 mark.

If all the pressed specimens from CALM's WA Herbarium were laid out they would cover an area the size of Perth's central city precinct—more than seven square kilometres!

The Herbarium's half-millionth specimen is an undescribed species of clematis, or Traveller's Joy, to be named *Clematis delicata*.

The attractive climbing shrub with cream and purple flowers grows in the Wheatbelt between Wubin and Ravensthorpe and is often mistaken for another species of Traveller's Joy, *Clematis linearifolia*, that grows in coastal sandy districts.

State Environment and Heritage Minister, Dr Judy Edwards, said the State collection had a flora specimen for every five square kilometres of WA's 2.5 mil-

by Sue McKenna

lion square kilometres.

"Seventy new specimens and 1000 edits to our specimen database are added each week," she said.

"In the past three years 14 new WA species have been named—and there are many more species to be found."

Dr Edwards said there was an ever-growing demand for information about plants and the environment, a demand acknowledged by the fact that the Herbarium was Australia's most technologically advanced.

"Because of the Herbarium's technological prowess, WA leads Australian herbaria in being able to match field observations about flora with images and other descriptive information," she said.

"We have a picture of what plants are found where, and from this we

can begin to assess what areas need to be protected."

The 500,000th specimen was collected by a CALM Regional Herbarium Network President and volunteer, farmer and wildflower enthusiast Dave Quicke, on the Kulin-Lake Grace Road.

"The contribution from the community, from farmers, from scholars and students underpins conservation and reinforces our commitment to the environment," Dr Edwards said.

"In the past three years volunteers from CALM's regional herbaria have contributed more than 10,000 specimens to the WA Herbarium's collection."

She said the initial collection of WA plants was carried out first by buccaneers such as William Dampier, followed by scientists accompanying explorers such as Baudin and Peron, D'Entrecasteaux and Flinders.

"In the early days of settlement it was carried out by residents such as Georgiana Molloy and James Drummond, and by scientific visitors such as Freiherr von Hugel, and Ludwig Preiss.

"Their work was followed later by that of the Victorian botanist Ferdinand von Mueller and his correspondents who included explorers such as Giles, Forrest and Helms; and later still by visiting scientists such as Spencer Moore, Diels and Pritzel," she said.

"Many of WA's national parks bear the names of these scientists. From the outset, plant collections were made by people of many backgrounds for a wide range of purposes—economic, horticultural and scientific.

"Botany has always held a vital place in our society, and that knowledge of plants, ecosystems and the environment is something of which to be proud," Dr Edwards said.



Botanist Mike Hislop (seated) verifies *Clematis delicata*, as plant collections manager Chang Sha Fang and database manager Sue Carroll look on.
Photo by Verna Costello