

JUST FOR APPEARANCE SAKE.

by J. McCormick.

Western Australia is often referred to as 'The Wildflower State' yet to live up to its reputation a considerable amount of time and effort must be spent on the conservation of native flora. The Department's role in this is probably greater than is generally accepted, for by the continuation of its controlled burning policy, and given the process of time, the major scrub species which are of little aesthetic value and are at the same time detrimental to the forest will be removed, thus making room for the smaller and more interesting plants whose appearance en masse is worthy of comment.

Another of the Department's activities which can add to the general amenity is Window Dressing. This generally takes the form of roadside thinning and roadside planting. The former is always successful, the latter only sometimes, for roadside planting can either enhance or spoil the natural environment according to the manner in which it is carried out.

Roadside planting takes on many forms, the first and most obvious being:-

Form A. The pure pine block: planted up to the road edge save for a ploughed fire break. In appearance it is out of context with the natural environment; it lacks interest and eliminates all native flora.

Form B. Can be referred to as the random roadside planting for so it appears, the trees being planted in rows parallel to the main highway in such a manner that what meets the eye is - four Cypress trees, six mallee type trees, five tall eucalypts etc. This form is interesting and does not eliminate native flora but it is artificial and does not blend well with the environment.

Form C. The pure eucalypt planting; is the most natural of all roadside plantings and by making use of the multifarious eucalypt species available in Australia some interesting effects can be obtained particularly when consideration is given to foliage and bark colouring. The planting of small groups along roadsides is never successful.

Window dressing is universally accepted and in some densely populated countries is indeed demanded by members of the public, for in those countries many a pleasant vista has been marred by unimaginative forest practices. In the not-too-distant future Western Australia will have a large and mobile population; more and more people will travel through the forest areas and much of their awareness of the Department's activities will be governed by what they see.
