

MARRI CANKER

Fungal canker causes lesions on the trunk and branches of marri trees, which often exude red kino and finally the bark peels off in sheets as the tree dies. This worrying disease appears to be increasing throughout the south-west of WA.

Trudy Paap reported on the start of her studies (at Murdoch University) into marri canker in WW 6/3, including a picture of a 'bull's-eye' infestation. She has now found that the disease is very widespread, occurring on about

25% of all trees surveyed, though it occurs at a higher percentage (38%) in remnants than in forest (13%). She has isolated what she thinks is the causal agent, a previously unknown *Quambalaria* species, and linked it to a disease reported in amenity-planted red-flowering gum in the 1920s.

The fact that the current symptoms are more prevalent on trees in disturbed areas, as well as the fact that in the 1920s it was stated that there was little damage to

marri, is leading Trudy to speculate whether the causal agent has been introduced to WA. There are other *Quambalaria* fungi on marri, but they don't seem to be causing tree death. She hopes to continue with her studies to determine the factors that are driving the decline, and to develop control and management options. Anyone who has been following the progress of tree decline in WA will be wishing her the best of luck (and plenty of research money!).