



Australian Government
Australian National Botanic Gardens

MEDIA RELEASE

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Celebrate our Wattle

Australia's floral emblem comes of age at the Australian National Botanic Gardens during celebrations to mark the 21st birthday of the declaration of the Golden Wattle as Australia's floral emblem from 1 September – 11 October 2009.

The exhibition, put together by Pat and Warwick Wright and assisted by curator Julie Ryder, shows how wattle has featured in Australian art, botany, history, culture and used by Indigenous Australians.

The wattle's declaration as the floral emblem was celebrated at the Australian National Botanic Gardens in ceremonial planting on 1 September 1988, by Mrs Hazel Hawke and then Minister for Administrative Services, Senator the Hon Robert Ray.

In 1992 then Governor-General Bill Hayden declared that 1 September was to be observed as National Wattle Day each year throughout Australia.

Each year since 1992 the Gardens has received hundreds of yellow ribbons as a gesture of friendship from the Acacia Appreciation Society, Hiroshima. It is said that a wattle was the first plant to bloom after the tragic events of 1945 in Hiroshima.

Sprigs of wattle, sent by mothers to sons overseas in World War 1, brought memories of home. Many years later in 1998, sprigs of wattle were used a symbol of remembrance and mourning by the then Governor-General, Sir William Deane, to commemorate the young Australians tragically lost in the Swiss canyon disaster. This symbolic use of wattle was repeated in 2002 when sprigs of wattle were used at the memorial service at the great hall of Parliament House for the victims of the Bali bombings.

The Gardens has several hundred of the almost 1000 species of Australian wattles, and this year's celebrations will include a range of public programs, guided walks and public talks.

Embroiderer Lynne Stone has also created a beautifully embroidered sculpture of *Acacia pycnantha*, commissioned by the Friends of ANBG, to be given to the people of Australia, for permanent display at the Gardens.

Botanist Joe Miller (Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research) has developed a live plant display in the shape of the latest "Phylogenetic Tree." This large-scale living exhibition will compare the many forms of wattle and highlight the incredible changes in leaf form and sizes in the wattles.

Activities also include a program of public talks, guided walks and school holiday sessions. Full details about the exhibition and associated activities is available from the Visitor Centre on 6250 9540.

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