



Centre
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Research



MEDIA RELEASE

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Farmers Act to Halt Native Vegetation Decline

An innovative approach to native plant revegetation in one of Australia's top cropping districts is set to reverse the region's trend of declining native vegetation.

The new database will help farmers find out what local native plants once grew in their area, and how to re-establish them.

With just 2.8 percent of the native vegetation cover remaining in the Harden Shire, landholders wanting to replant local native species have had to guess what originally grew on their land.

"Planting native species has always been a challenge as there is so little information on the original species that grew around Harden," says Harden Murrumburrah Landcare Coordinator Ms Louise Hufton. "There's been even less data on how and where to re-establish them."

The database, developed by the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research (CPBR) and the Harden Murrumburrah Landcare Group with funding from the Natural Heritage Trust, will help to overcome this.

Information for the database came from the Australian National Herbarium in Canberra, part of the CPBR. The Australian National Herbarium is the largest herbarium in Australia. It is much like a museum for plants which have been collected from the bush, dried and stored, and information about them recorded.

"We knew that within the records of the Australian National Herbarium there would be information about plants that have been collected from the Harden region since European settlement," says Dr Judy West, Director of the CPBR.

Plant specimens collected over 200 years ago by colonial botanists such as Sir Joseph Banks are kept in the Herbarium and new plant specimens are continually added.

"By searching our records and identifying all the plants collected from the Harden region we have come up with a list of plants that we think represents what grew in the region prior to clearing," says Dr West.

Local landholders and experts also provided their knowledge of local plants to add to the database.

"Aside from the descriptions of the species themselves the database includes other useful information that will help with revegetation," says Dr West.

The final database describes where in the landscape the species was found such as on rocky hilltops or moist sheltered valleys. It also describes the species' habitat, other plants it grew with, the type of soil it grew on and whether it was an understorey plant or a tree.

"The database also includes practical information on how to propagate the species and where to plant them in the paddock," says Dr West.

"Revegetating the Harden region with local native plants will now be a lot easier with this resource," says Ms Hufton.

The database and an accompanying report by the CPBR is available in paper copy, on CD Rom and on the Internet at www.anbg.gov.au/greening-grainbelt.

"This project is the first of its kind in Australia and we hope that it will serve as a model for other Landcare Groups throughout Australia," says Dr West.

This project is a joint project between Harden Murrumburrah Landcare Group and the Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research (CPBR) supported by the Natural Heritage Trust.

CPBR is a collaboration between the Australian National Botanic Gardens and CSIRO Plant Industry. Pictures are available at www.anbg.gov.au/cpbr/media-releases

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[Photo](#) from 6 April handover - Dr Judy West shows herbarium specimen to Landcare Coordinator Louise Hufton.

Visit the [Greening the Grainbelt](#) web site